ABACA:
The socio-economic and cultural transformation of frontier Davao, 1898-1941

By

Patricia Irene Dacudao

MA History, Ateneo de Manila University

BS Management, Major in Legal Management, Ateneo de Manila University

This thesis is presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Murdoch University

August 2017
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research, and contains as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Patricia Irene Dacudao
ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the encounter of the local and the foreign in Davao, a region in the southern Philippines, during the first half of the twentieth century. Davao, under American rule, was a multi-layered contact zone where local peoples met and interacted with foreigners and their market systems, and appropriated and consumed their manufactured goods and ideas.

Divided into three parts, the thesis begins with how the indigenous world dealt with Spain and the United States at the turn of the century. It explores how the idea of the frontier, and its progress and development, as conceived by the Americans in their westward movement was carried over to an area of Mindanao being settled by a Filipino majority co-residing with other nationalities, including Spanish, American, British, Chinese, and Lebanese people, as well as a significant Japanese population.

Abaca, the crop from which cordage fiber was produced, lured these diverse peoples to Davao. Consequently, utilizing a commodity-based approach, the second part of the thesis investigates how Davao’s mono-crop economy and frontier was developed by plantations producing this export commodity. The plantations transformed Davao from what was regarded by the colonial regime as an isolated “backwater” comprised of small coastal villages to a thriving agricultural and commercial center, supplying the United States, Britain and Japan’s demand for abaca. In the process, new production techniques and marketing methods evolved by combining traditional practices with modern technologies on a developing resource frontier.

The third part examines the cosmopolitan character of Davao through material exchanges and personal encounters, providing a social and cultural dimension to history. In the same way that the multinational population of Davao appropriated imported goods through the sensory experiences of taste, sight, sound and touch, their day-to-day interactions with one another also transformed existing cultures, giving rise to new cultural forms and practices. What arose from these encounters of mentalities, economies, and material life is a history and culture that was both cosmopolitan and, ultimately, distinctly Filipino.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... iii
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ vii
List of Maps ................................................................................................................ vii
List of Figures .............................................................................................................. vii
List of Appendices ....................................................................................................... viii
Weights, Measures and Currencies ............................................................................. ix
List of Abbreviations ................................................................................................... ix
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... x

INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1

1. Aim .............................................................................................................................. 1
2. The Literature ............................................................................................................ 3
   a. Placing Davao in Philippine Historiography ...................................................... 4
   b. Histories of the American West and Empire ..................................................... 9
3. Method and Approach .............................................................................................. 12
   a. Commodity-based approach ............................................................................ 13
   b. Towards hybridity ............................................................................................. 15
4. Significance and Contribution ............................................................................... 19
5. Thesis Structure ....................................................................................................... 21

PART I: AN IDEA

CHAPTER 1. DAVAO: ON THE PERIPHERY OF TWO EMPIRES .................................... 27

1. First Peoples ............................................................................................................. 27
   a. A ‘mezclar las razas’ ....................................................................................... 29
   b. Hunters, foragers, and traders ........................................................................ 33
   c. Borrowings within and without ...................................................................... 34
2. Mindanao in the Age of Encounter ...................................................................... 37
   a. Villalobos, Davao and environs (1542-1545) ................................................. 41
   b. Davao in the Maguindanao Trade, 1571-1678 ............................................. 43
   c. Spanish Incursions, 1609-1845 ..................................................................... 46
   d. The last conquistador ..................................................................................... 51
   e. The isolation of Spanish Davao, 1848-1898 .................................................. 52
3. America ascendant .................................................................................................. 55
   a. The American frontier expands to the Philippines ........................................ 58
   b. The first Americans in Davao ........................................................................ 59
5. The *pakyaw* .................................................................................................................. 159
6. Davao-Manila disconnection: The ‘Davao Land Problem’ ........................................ 164
7. International factors ..................................................................................................... 168

CHAPTER 5. THE BUSINESS OF SUPPLYING WORLD MARKETS ........................................ 177
1. Davao and the market prices of abaca: A survey ......................................................... 177
2. Merchant houses and the tumultuous turn-of-the-century .......................................... 180
3. Farmers, merchants, manufacturers and government agents during the early twentieth century ............................................................... 182
4. The Great War boom and bust ...................................................................................... 186
   a. The Philippine National Bank fiasco ...................................................................... 190
   b. Backlash from the American hemp traders ............................................................ 191
   c. British complaints and low-grade suppression ....................................................... 192
5. Davao’s time: Opportunities in the interwar markets .................................................. 194
6. Collective undertakings ................................................................................................. 196
7. The Auction System ...................................................................................................... 200

CHAPTER 6. IN THE HINTERLANDS ................................................................................. 209
1. Taming the world market by mastering science ............................................................ 209
   a. Variety ..................................................................................................................... 211
   b. Soil and location .................................................................................................... 212
2. Plantation operations: Mixing local practices with foreign know-how ...................... 213
   a. Breaking ground: Kaingin ..................................................................................... 213
   b. Planting .................................................................................................................. 216
   c. Disease and maintenance ...................................................................................... 218
   d. Harvesting and methods of fiber extraction ............................................................. 219
      i. Manual method .................................................................................................... 220
      ii. Semi-automatic method and the *hagotan* ......................................................... 221
      iii. Fully-automatic method .................................................................................... 223
   e. Drying and baling .................................................................................................... 224
3. Life in the hinterlands ..................................................................................................... 225
   a. Earning a living ....................................................................................................... 225
   b. Finding contentment on a far-flung frontier ............................................................ 229
   c. Other plantation concerns ...................................................................................... 230
   d. Home on the frontier ............................................................................................... 231
   e. Passing time ............................................................................................................ 233
4. Connecting hub and hinterlands: Private roads and public transportation .................. 236
   a. Private roads ............................................................................................................ 236
   b. Public transportation ............................................................................................... 238
      i. The public transport pioneers ............................................................................. 238
      ii. Growing pains ..................................................................................................... 240
      iii. Competition ...................................................................................................... 242
PART III: CREATING CULTURE

CHAPTER 7. FROM CAMOTES AT TUBAN TO ANN SHERIDAN AT THE IDEAL:
MATERIAL CULTURE IN DAVAO’S CONTACT ZONES ........................................253

1. Venues of commercial exchanges ............................................................. 254
   a. Government stores and trading stations ............................................. 256
   b. Plantation stores, tiendas and other private retail establishments ...... 260
   c. Mail-order and other forms of merchandising ................................... 268
   d. The case of tinned milk: Appropriating food in Davao’s material culture ................................................................. 270

2. Bringing the world to Davao ................................................................. 273
   a. The visual allure of magazines and movies ....................................... 274
   b. The wonder of sound machines: Phonographs and radios ............... 280
   c. The case of Singer: Localizing a multinational on the Davao frontier ................................................................. 283

CHAPTER 8. SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN DAVAO’S CONTACT ZONES .... 294

1. Davao’s diversity by 1939 ................................................................. 294

2. Cosmopolitan spaces: Barracks, convents, clubrooms, and sporting fields ................................................................. 295

3. Schools as microcosm of the region ...................................................... 301
   a. Public schools and parochial schools: Cooperation and competition ................................................................. 301
   b. Japanese schools: Countering assimilation through education .......... 308
   c. The Chinese school: Sustaining children of another cultural heritage ................................................................. 310
   d. American homeschooling in the 1930s, from the perspective of three families ................................................................. 311
   e. The multi-lingual schoolyard as a contact zone .................................. 312

4. Carnivals and fairs: Mingling the sacred and the profane ................. 316

5. Mixed marriages: The case of hybrid families .................................... 323

EPILOGUE & CONCLUSION. ABACA IS DEAD, LONG LIVE DAVAO .................. 334

APPENDICES ............................................................................................ 341

GLOSSARY ............................................................................................... 353

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................................... 357
LIST OF TABLES

3.1. Gifts and Non-Cummings Purchases for the Field Museum Philippine Collections .......................................................... 123
4.1. Public land applications, Davao, 1906-1932 .................................................. 146
4.2. Bureau of Lands application process .................................................. 152
5.1. Abaca Market Prices, 1899-1911 .................................................. 177
5.2. Abaca Market Prices, 1915-1937 .................................................. 178
5.3. Philippine and Davao Abaca Production, 1915-1936 .................................. 179
8.1. Population of Davao Province by nationality, 1903, 1918, 1939 ............... 295
8.2. San Pedro Baptismal Records, A-B Surnames, Different Province Unions, 1936-1941 .................................................. 325

LIST OF MAPS

1.1. The Philippines, Southeast Asia and neighbors ........................................ 26
1.2. Southeastern Mindanao pre-historic excavation sites ................................ 28
1.3. Different tribes of Davao by Fay-Cooper Cole .......................................... 32
1.4. 18th century Dutch Map of the Philippines, Celebes and Moluccas .......... 38
1.5. Selected Spanish settlements in eastern Mindanao, 18th-19th century ....... 48
2.1. Southeastern Mindanao ................................................................. 68
3.1. Guthe’s trek along the Saug River, June 1924 ........................................ 127
3.2. The Haydens’ Cotabato-Davao journey, 1931 ........................................ 132
3.3. Mindanao and Sulu sites of the Parker Air Expedition, 1934 ................. 135
7.1. Downtown Davao, early 1940s ........................................................ 277

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1. Mouth of Caraga River, 1905 ............................................................ 70
2.2. Musa textilis Née ................................................................. 78
2.3. An abaca plantation in Davao .......................................................... 87
2.4. Santa Ana wharf, 1930s .............................................................. 98
2.5. Commemorative postcard of Davao-Manila inaugural flight, 1935 ........ 99
3.1. Chicago World’s Fair Overview, 1893 ............................................. 109
3.2. Bagobo Village, St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904 ................................... 111
3.3. Sarah Metcalf and Bagobo friends, 1932 ....................................... 114
3.4. Bankeroohan settlement, 1924 .................................................... 128
3.5. Aerial view of the Port of Davao, 1934 .......................................... 134
3.6. A Bagobo with aviator’s cap, 1932 ............................................... 136
6.1. Kaingin .......................................................... 214
6.2. A battery of *hagotans* ................................................................. 222
6.3. Behrendt fully automatic abaca stripping machine .......................... 223
6.4. Bringing hemp to market .............................................................. 225
6.5. Removing the tuxies ..................................................................... 227
6.6. *Hagotan* strippers on a trailer bed ............................................... 228
6.7. P.U. in downtown Davao ............................................................... 240
7.1. Manobo girls with soap ................................................................. 262
7.2. Cake for a child’s birthday party .................................................... 272
7.3. Monteverde-Tionko sisters at home, 1940 ....................................... 285
8.1. Davao’s multicultural inhabitants socializing, late 1930s .................. 298
8.2. Students outside San Pedro convent, early 1900s ............................. 305
8.3. Grade II class picture, Davao Elementary School, 1939-1940 ........... 307
8.4. Bayabas Japanese Primary School, 1930s ....................................... 309
8.5. Grade VI class picture, Davao Chinese School, 1937-1938 ............. 311
8.6. San Pedro Church and plaza, early 1900s ....................................... 316
8.7. Rizal Day, 1925 ............................................................................. 319
8.8. Davao Carnival Auditorium, 1938 ................................................ 319
8.9. International Night, Davao Carnival, 1941 ..................................... 322
8.10. Frank Fox and family, 1924 .......................................................... 326

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

A  “Davao Natives Help the Mutineers Attack Convent”


B Decision on “Salome (Bagoba), Aguianon (Bagobo)

vs. Jose A. Castro” by the Director of Lands, Simeon Ramos,

October 1, 1935. ................................................................................. 347
WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND CURRENCIES

WEIGHTS

1 picul = 60.5 kilograms
1 picul = 137.50 pounds in Manila
1 bale = 2 piculs

MEASURES

1 hectare = 2.5 acres
1 mile = 1.61 kilometer

CURRENCIES

1.00 Rix Dollar = 2.50 Guilders (seventeenth century)
1.00 Peso, Spanish = 2.00 Guilders (seventeenth century)
1.00 Peso, Philippine = 0.50 U.S. Dollars (1900 to 1940)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIA     Bureau of Insular Affairs, Washington, D.C.
INAEC   Iloilo Negros Air Express Co.
NARA    U.S. National Archives and Records Administration
NDC     National Development Company
PNB     Philippine National Bank
VOC     Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or the United East India Company
This thesis, which had been a wonderful personal journey, was made more special by the people who have enriched it. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Emeritus Professor James Francis Warren. I could not have asked for a better mentor, scholar or person in Jim, whose wise advice, meticulous comments, and unstinting support in every aspect of this journey made the rigors of historical research immensely rewarding. Most grateful appreciation is also due to Associate Professor Carol Warren, who always had words of encouragement for me and my work.

My Ph.D. study has been financially supported by the International Postgraduate Research Scholarship, the Australian Postgraduate Award and the Murdoch International Top Up. Research travel and fieldwork were made possible by the James F. Warren (CI) Australia Research Council (Murdoch University) & Gwyn Campbell (CI) Social Science Humanities Research Council Canada (McGill University) Major Collaborative Research Initiative Linkage Grant, and a Research Fellowship for Southeast Asian Scholars from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of the University of Michigan. I am also grateful for the institutional support of Murdoch University and the Asia Research Centre (ARC), my haven for the past three and a half years. Many thanks to Professors Kevin Hewison and Garry Rodan, and the ARC staff for providing the necessary academic support. Particular thanks is extended to Dale Banks, Sia Kozlowski and Sandy Clark for making possible a conducive environment for me to work in.

I took inspiration and encouragement from ARC cohorts Faris, Jemi, Thao, Andi, and Nurul, and colleagues Rainy, Indra, Sait, Kazi, Max, Gia, Marco, Melissa, Charlotte, and Yanti, who is dearly missed. It was also such pleasure to share the Ph.D. journey with Tio who was there from orientation week tours at the beginning to cultural events nearing completion, and Masuka, Tim, Charles, Sanjiv, Heru, Neville, Leon, Thanez, Marcela, Tran, Ana Rita, Arif, and Kanwal who enlivened work at the Transportable; and Darmanto, Nimas, Fr. Cyp, Justin, Rini, Steve, Sr. Fely, Sr. Melanie, Jon and Kate, Benson, Sam and Esther, for making Uni and Perth life both fun and meaningful. I am grateful for having Sasa who was instrumental in my coming to Perth,
Sandra who found Casa Blanca; and Liyi, Jely, Emma, and fellow-Dabawenyo, Anabelle, as housemates extraordinaire and co-explorers in jaunts in and outside Perth. Their lively conversations and friendships made my experience of Australia and the post-graduate life such a joy. ¡Vamos a luchar!

Sincere appreciation goes to Gio and Neil McKay who first welcomed me to Perth and to family dinners, too, as well as reading parts of my research. I am most fortunate to meet Laura Medina Moreno, Juan Carlos Corzo, and Yohei Okamoto in multi-lingual Perth. Their help in translating hand-written Spanish letters and Japanese texts, as well as their friendships, are most appreciated, as also Carmel, for providing the perfect life/dance-work balance in Perth.

In the U.S. and the Philippines, I am grateful for the camaraderie given by Atsuko, Jay, Kyle, Jonas, Laurie and the ‘Underwood Mafia,’ Emily, Ritche, Law, Vanessa, Anna, Ian, Yeti, Wowie, Nats, and Jayson. My profuse gratitude goes to my cousin Jen Dumlao, who always makes reconnecting with Davao friends so much easier. Their support in helping me find interview participants, as well as providing timely distractions are greatly appreciated.

Philippine fieldwork would have been incomplete without the help of Vincent Garcia, the Davao City Senior Citizen’s Association, Benjie Lizada of the Hijos de Davao, Joseph Orilla of Barangay 7-A, Butch Torrefiel, Ana de la Fuente, Kristine Joy Lanass, and most specially, the interview participants who generously shared their time and lifestories.

I am grateful to all my colleagues at the Ateneo de Manila University, especially the late Prof. Lydia Yu Jose. I take inspiration from their continued encouragement, scholarship and friendship, as I look forward to joining them once more.

I wish to thank the Geoffrey Bolton Library staff, especially Pam Mathews, Michael Stone and Karina Zilm for their kind assistance to the many requests I have made in the course of my research. My gratitude extends as well to Dhea Santos, Bhal Rabe and the staff at the American Historical Collection and the Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila University for their continued support. Even when I was in Perth, their help was just an email away. Thank you, too to Fr. Tony de Castro, S.J., Fr. Rene Javellana, S.J., and Bro. Madz Tumbali, S.J. for providing useful information and access to the
Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus. I am also most grateful to Divine Jope and the Jose P. Laurel Foundation for warmly welcoming and helping me.

I could not have written a major portion of this thesis without the assistance of the people at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), for which I am extremely indebted. From Paul Harrison of NARA I who mailed complimentary hardcopies of the RG 395 inventory, Joseph Schwarz of NARA II who not only gave detailed advice over email, but also assisted me on my first day at College Park, and to the much appreciated staff at both NARA locations whose cheerful professionalism provided immeasurable support to this researcher. Considerable thanks also goes to the staff of the Library of Congress in the Manuscript Reading Room and the Periodical Reading Room for their valuable assistance.

Heartfelt appreciation is extended to Martha Smalley and Joan Duffy at the Yale Divinity School Library, Sara Logue and the staff of the Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library of the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Lynn Niedermeier of the Manuscripts & Folklife Archives of the Western Kentucky University Special Collections Library, Richard Baker and Gen.(Ret.) Hal Nelson at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Jo Ellen McKillop Dickie and the staff of the Newberry Library, and to Casie Pontone and Armand Esai of the Field Museum. Researching at the University of Michigan was a delight because of Nayiri Mullinix, Christy-Anne Castro, Fe Susan Go and Jean Charles Robin, and the Bentley Historical Library’s Diana Bachman and colleagues.

I sincerely thank Dr. Patricia Afable, Assoc. Professors Cherubim Quizon, and Richard Meixsel, Professors William Clarence Smith, Brian Linn, Midori Kawashima, Greg Bankoff, and Shinzo Hayase for their valuable advice and encouragement in the early phase of my thesis. Profuse thanks goes to Dr. Bernardita Churchill for allowing me to present thesis ideas before the Philippine National Historical Society in Washington, D.C. I earnestly acknowledge Prof. Sandra Wilson for helping me and fellow-Ph.D. Arts students prepare for our Confirmation of Candidature presentations in Murdoch University. My keen gratitude too, to Prof. Michael Sturma and Dr. Joseph Christensen for their support as chair and member of my Ph.D. Committee. I am exceedingly grateful to Steve Westcott and Dean Laslett, for patiently reading and
commenting on the final drafts of my thesis, and to Julian Tyne for providing the maps to my specifications. My thesis is much better because of all their contribution.

My family has been with me in every step of this journey. Not only did I imbibe my fascination with Davao from their stories, often over food cooked by Tita Celine, but their support has sustained me throughout. I am deeply indebted to Mike E. Dakudao for introducing me to Davao’s past, and who have, without fail, provided materials and resource persons for my research. I also wholeheartedly thank Burjex Dacudao for helping me with the San Pedro Parish Records. I am grateful to Lisa and Olaf Reyes, for giving me a warm welcome to the U.S. and for ensuring I was well-clothed for the East Coast winter; as I am to Evelyn, Marily, Tony and Cris Sarmiento for making Christmas 2014 in NYC very memorable. My extended stay in D.C. was made most splendid by the Maistos, for which I am profoundly thankful: to John and Nini, who not only provided me their house, but equally important, their time over dinner-table conversations, sharing their experiences about U.S.-Philippine and family histories; to Tina and Bill, for making sure I was alright while “home alone;” and to Johnny, Maria, and their families, Ging and Mike Graham, and Delia, for making me feel so at home in the U.S.

In Perth, Monina Magallanes and Bill Buchanan made sure I had the comforts of home, and that I got to enjoy the sights and sounds of Western Australia, as well. Through them, I learned the meaning of the term *encargado*, as understood and lived by my grandparent’s generation in the Davao of my study.

Finally, I thank Louie, Tricia and Yves; Francis, Candy, Cody and Anton; and most especially, my parents Tony and Esper, for allowing me and supporting me to pursue my interest in history. I could not ask for more, and this work is dedicated to them.
INTRODUCTION

1. Aim

This thesis studies the settlement history of the Davao region from 1898 to 1941. It explores how this southern Philippine region developed due to the transnational and transcultural exchanges that occurred on its frontier in the first half of the twentieth century. The study identifies the causes of Davao’s growth as an emerging economic center, and stresses the cosmopolitan nature of the region that subsequently emerged. Consequently, this research explores the nature of the material-cultural negotiations and exchanges happening on a frontier that was settled by many people, including indigenous Filipino, Christian Filipino, American, Japanese, Chinese, Middle Eastern, European and even Australian settlers. It also asks how the particular circumstances of Davao’s tropical frontier – economic-cultural-political – shaped the remarkable growth of the region in a period of just forty years.

Davao’s unique circumstances and development stem from the arrival of its multi-ethnic inhabitants bent on populating a rapidly expanding frontier, port town and hinterland. The site of one of the largest cities in the Philippines by the 1930s was only a string of small coastal villages, populated by some indigenous converts to the Catholic Faith and a few Spanish colonials, in the late nineteenth century. Things drastically changed however, when the United States annexed the Philippines from Spain, through the 1898 Treaty of Paris. The following year, American settlers began to establish export-crop plantations on the Davao frontier, which resulted in increased population growth and early economic development.

It must be noted that these pioneer American settlers were also products of their own country’s frontier history. Late nineteenth-century Americans believed in Manifest Destiny or the notion that the United States was divinely destined to civilize those deemed primitive or savage still inhabiting wilderness-frontiers in the American

---

West, and overseas. This ‘wilderness’ frontier in the late nineteenth-century popular imagination stretched from America’s trans-Mississippi West, southward to Latin America, and even further west across the Pacific to Hawaii and the Philippines. In the 1890s, historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s thesis on the significance of the frontier in shaping American thought and identity captured the beliefs of a nation. These powerful set of ideas were transferred across the Pacific in the establishment of the American outpost of empire in Davao, where the forces of global trade flourished due to abaca, an export crop grown in its hinterlands.

A strategically important commodity, abaca was used as cordage material in the navies of Great Britain, America and Japan. Thus, Davao was connected to the world by a network of international trade, despite being a far-flung resource frontier. This fact leads to several questions: Whether the Davao frontier was simply an economic periphery, only connected through the structures and processes of trade to the world metropoles, or did its global connections stretch beyond the mere economic links that trade ensured? Was Davao an isolated frontier, or was it more directly linked to the outside world upon which it was dependent, than was generally thought to be the case? These questions continue the social inquiry made famous by Turner on how a “frontier” is defined. Recent scholarship has argued that “towns and cities at the far reaches of empire” also constituted frontiers, as well as the “bush, backwoods and borderlands.” What then, was the place of such urban frontiers in the global-imperial world? To find answers to such questions, this research studies how international economic and material linkages contributed to the creation of the Davao region, while it also explores how various cultural objects, practices, and institutions helped shape Davao, as its migrant peoples brought their own histories and cultural baggage to the frontier during this forty-year period of development.

These questions are set against the contextual backdrop of shifting global economic and social forces in the early twentieth century. This was a period when rapid technological advances in communication and transportation were shrinking the globe at a rate hitherto unprecedented in world history, while also accelerating industrialization and its demand for raw materials. In a related development, the turn

---

8 Manifest Destiny is a name and idea, a powerful imposition of will, very similar to European imperialism’s ‘civilizing mission’ (mission civilisatrice), which Rudyard Kipling named “the white man’s burden” at the onset of the Philippine-American War in 1899.
of the century witnessed America’s entry upon the world stage. This was made official with the acquisition of the Philippines and other Spanish colonies through their victory against Spain in 1898. In the Philippines, the frontier of Davao – because it was rapidly opened at this particular moment in time – bears the hallmarks and traits of this colonial development in its trademark American institutions, infrastructures, and material culture. But, due to increased mobility, better communication and transport technologies, Davao’s frontier rapidly became a multi-national mosaic. Multiethnic settlers met and mixed in Davao’s plantations, ports, and markets. Hence, the thesis also seeks to understand how multiculturalism on the frontier influenced the largest settler group among the province’s population, the Filipinos, by examining their everyday lives on the plantations and in their homes, and through agricultural practices, and sensory experiences. The new emergent frontier culture is further analyzed by the people’s participation in civic life through schools, clubs, and carnivals.

This research asks just how inclusive the boundaries of Philippine history can become, and how far core ideas associated with the history of the American West can be transferred. It studies a major aspect of the encounter of the American empire with a nation that has a long history of its own, the Philippines, on a multicultural frontier. Many histories and cultural traditions converged in Davao, conveyed in the memories and lifeways of Filipino and American settlers, as well as among those of Japan, China, Spain, the Middle East, and, of course, the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Rather than recount the history of a ‘triumphant narrative of progress,’ this research looks more closely at the negotiations and exchanges that occurred between peoples on this contact zone, that led to borrowing, appropriation and hybridity by 1940.

2. The Literature

This study on Davao history straddles diverse historical fields, namely, Philippine history, the history of the United States, and commodity-based history. These fields of historical inquiry all converge on the Davao frontier, wherein they are

---

C While the field of Cultural Studies has an ongoing discourse on multiculturalism, ranging from post-colonial debates to academic and political movements, I use the term ‘multicultural’ in its more literal sense, to describe the movements and meeting of diverse peoples.

D Unless specified, the term “Filipino” as used in the thesis signifies both Christian and indigenous peoples.
transposed, at times, into the broader field of cultural studies, with particular reference to hybridity.

a. Placing Davao in Philippine Historiography

The thesis explores the Philippine settler experience on a distant tropical frontier where various nationalities were brought together and co-resided in a vast region, within a comparatively short span of time. In the literature of Philippine migration studies, a lacuna exists in relation to pre-World War II Davao migration. The most relevant work on pre-war Mindanao migration was done by Karl J. Pelzer (1945) in *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics: Studies in Land Utilization and Agricultural Colonization in Southeastern Asia*, a comparative study of government settlement projects in Mindanao and Java. In his important book, Pelzer discussed the problems of land tenure and the policies the Spanish and American colonial governments introduced to address them. First among government economic initiatives in the American era was opening new lands on Mindanao to achieve the twin aims of providing land for the landless farmers of Luzon and the Visayas, and, for development of the sparsely populated island of Mindanao. Quite revealing of the prevailing American mindset at the tail end of their rule, Pelzer described Mindanao as a frontier, “the land of promise and unlimited opportunity.” Since Davao was not a site of government-sponsored colonization, it was only mentioned in passing, while the primary focus was devoted to neighboring Cotabato Province during the first half of the twentieth century.

For a more Davao-specific treatment on migration, the author’s (2010) journal article *Migrant Settlers in A Land of Promise* sought to analyze the ethnic composition of Davao settlers through the use of parish records. Using data from the San Pedro baptismal records, Dacudao (2010) traced the birthplaces of the father/settlers between 1898 to 1941. The records show that four out of the top five places of provenance were the Visayan islands of Cebu, Bohol, Leyte and Panay. Other migration studies on Davao deal with the post-World War II period, the most notable by Paul Simkins and Frederick Wernstedt (1971) on the migrants of the Digos-Padada Valley.

---


---
Their monograph analyzed the much improved socio-economic conditions of the migrant settlers compared to their earlier life in the Visayas.

Venturing beyond migration studies into the field of history, most literature on pre-World War II Davao can be arranged according to its actors’ nationalities, namely Americans, Japanese and Filipinos. Since the first half of the twentieth-century falls under the period of American colonial rule, the standard work on the American colonial administration in Mindanao is by Peter Gowing (1977). Based mainly on reports of the Governors General of the Moro Province, Gowing reviewed the American “mandate in Moroland” through pacification and developmental efforts, and milestones under the administrations of four American governors of the island. Gowing’s work was a Mindanao-wide survey, thus, Davao does not figure prominently in his book because most of the American pacification programs were directed towards the western sector of the island, where the Muslims lived.

Davao-specific narratives can be found in Lewis Gleeck’s series of articles on pioneer Americans in Davao which was published in the Bulletin of the American Historical Collection in 1992. Based mostly on newspaper and magazine accounts, Gleeck reconstructed the stories of the American planters in Davao, when they first started their abaca and coconut plantations around the Davao Gulf coast, and how they fared with the rise of Japanese abaca corporations during the interwar period. A more detailed treatment of one of the Davao American planters can be found in John Russel Frank’s (2010) personal account of his family’s sojourn in the Philippines. Based on recorded interviews and family papers, the Frank family saga reveals how an American family participated in various aspects of the colonial project through military service, commercial activities, including plantation agriculture, the invention of machines, and the creation of electric power plants on the Mindanao frontier.

A survey of literature on Davao reveals an emphasis on Davao’s development from a frontier town to a modern regional center. This major theme of urban-regional development includes two sub-themes, mostly written about in the 1930s and 1940s. One emphasizes the major contribution of the Japanese to the development of Davao,

---

5 While there are several scholarly works on the Chinese in the Philippines, the Chinese in Davao, the third largest ethnic group in pre-World War II Davao, still lacks a work of scholarly distinction.

6 One of the reasons for Davao’s attraction as a settlement site was the absence of the feared “moros.” (Patricio N. Abinales, Making Mindanao: Davao and Cotabato in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 73.)
while the other stresses the threat posed by them to Philippine national interests. While government reports, magazines, and news articles highlighted these themes during the pre-war period, most scholars, however, wrote retrospectively about these issues after the 1950s.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, American colonial reports and newspapers considered Davao, and the entire Moro Province, akin to the “frontier of our Great West,” and encouraged settlement of the area, preferably by Americans or Europeans “to introduce higher standards of industrial and agricultural capacity.”

The first governor of the Moro Province, General Leonard Wood, foresaw an influx of Western settlers that would set an example for the rest of the inhabitants of Mindanao. Patricio Abinales (2010) attributed Wood’s view of promoting economic development through plantation agriculture to the Progressive Movement in the United States, which had been championed during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt between 1901 and 1909.

Articles in the American Chamber of Commerce Journal viewed the development of Davao as an example of pioneer success, similar to the experience of the American West of bringing progress to a wilderness area and “teach[ing] industry to tribes.”

Likewise, American settlers and entrepreneurs welcomed the Japanese to Davao in pursuit of development opportunities. The aforementioned journal consistently took note of the success of the Japanese migrants throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Filipinos writing for The Philippine Journal of Commerce also wrote positively about the economic progress of Davao and the modern production processes employed by the Japanese in the abaca industry. Economic development was also the frame of reference within which Filipino journalist Modesto Farolan wrote about the controversial subject of the Public Land Law of 1919 and the so-called ‘Davao Problem.’ While praising the Japanese contribution to economic progress, Farolan also stressed the ability of Filipino settlers to succeed in Davao with suitable government assistance and encouragement. However, he then criticized the Filipinos’ lack of self-discipline and the government’s lack of overall coordination.

News about Davao in the 1930s, such as those articles published in the American-owned but Filipino-staffed Philippines Free Press inevitably focused on the Japanese. Lying behind these concerned stories were the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1937, while in the foreground of the
news, was the booming economy of the Davao abaca industry backed with Japanese labor and capital. Consequently, journalists were divided over their assessment of the Japanese presence and contribution in Davao. Some gave the Japanese full credit for the development of the abaca industry, while others begrudged their success and drew an alarming connection between their presence in Davao and Japanese expansionism in Asia. Still, others described them as illegal settlers and cultivators.\(^{15}\)

Scholarly works on pre-war Davao began to appear in the 1950s. But in these studies, the Japanese were the principal subjects, rather than Filipinos. Post-war studies on the Japanese – the second largest ethnic group in pre-war Davao – are numerous. The “Japanese colony in Davao” was the subject of Serafin D. Quiason’s 1958 article; Cecil E. Cody (1958 and 1959) studied pre-war Japanese companies and daily life in Davao based on recollections of Davao inhabitants, and Milagros Guerrero (1966) wrote about Japanese businesses in the Philippines before World War II.\(^{16}\) The political and diplomatic relationship between the Japanese and the Philippine colonial government was the topic of Grant K. Goodman’s 1967 study, while Josefa M. Saniel (1966) wrote about the social structure of the Japanese in Davao and their economic impact on Davao and the Philippines.\(^{17}\) Their articles depict a culturally close-knit community of settlers concentrated mostly in the abaca industry of Davao. Guerrero (1966) and Goodman (1967) mention the use of Filipinos as dummies on behalf of the Japanese to skirt around the Public Land Law of 1919, while Theodore Friend (1969) examined Philippine political entanglements between the United States and Japan in the crucial period between 1929 and 1946.\(^{18}\) These studies published within a single generation after the Second World War, highlight the foreign-ness of the Japanese settlers, and implied that the Japanese in Davao were military expansionists. This often placed the Filipino and American settlers interacting with the Japanese in a bad light – akin to collaborators and “dummies” fronting for Japanese economic interests.

More recent scholarship has ceased to be in such an adversarial mode. In 1984, Shinzo Hayase’s Ph.D. thesis focused on the participation of Japanese migrants in the abaca industry, and their social interactions with the indigenous peoples of Davao under American colonial rule.\(^{19}\) In 1992, Lydia Yu Jose’s book suggested that the Japanese corporations in Davao actually competed among themselves, and were based there on the frontier for primarily economic reasons, rather than military goals.\(^{20}\) Additional articles by Yu Jose studied Japanese perceptions of Filipinos, the
‘Davao Land Problem,’ and other matters that caught the attention of the Japanese about the Philippines from 1900 to 1941. The economic incentive for migration, as opposed to the military expansionist one, is further substantiated by Abinales (2000) in his study of the political dynamics of the American and Japanese settler societies of Davao and how they dealt with the central Philippine government establishing its authority on this distant frontier.

Another recent development apart from political histories with American and Japanese as principal subjects, are studies that shift the focus to Filipinos, whether the indigenous peoples of Mindanao or the Christian settlers from Luzon and the Visayas. Again, Hayase (1984, 1985, 2007) pioneered this field with his studies on the Bagobo and their reactions to the establishment of American colonial rule and the incursions of the global economy with the introduction of cash-crop plantations in Davao. Heidi K. Gloria (1987) also examined the Bagobo with a special focus on their acculturation to Christianized society, beginning with Spanish contact and the arrival of the conquistador Oyanguren in the 1840s. Gloria Dabbay (1995) and Ernesto Corcino (1998), in time for the Philippine Centennial celebrations, published well-organized, and largely political surveys of Davao history and its place in the national story.

Macario D. Tiu (2003) has written at length about the indigenous response to the imposition of American rule on Davao in the early twentieth century. Based on oral sources and written documents, and centering on a critical event – the political killing of Governor Edward Bolton by Mangulayon, a Manobo chief – Tiu reconstructs the worlds of the various indigenous communities of Davao, and their widespread resistance against American rule. Utilizing the same method of his first book, deploying the use of ‘text and memory,’ Tiu’s second study on Davao (2005) widened the narrative scope in a more comprehensive and inclusive ethno-history of the peoples of Davao. The wide ranging treatment includes the numerous indigenous myths and legends of the Lumads, as well as sectional and personal histories of American, Japanese, Chinese and Filipino settlers of Davao.

Some of these Davao-specific works, explicitly deplore the loss of local traditions and the destruction of the indigenous tribes in the course of Davao’s settlement and development. Others tacitly blame American and Christian-Filipino settlers for imposing their own culture on the indigenous tribes and praise the Japanese for their ability to co-exist with tribal peoples. The few biographies of Filipino settlers to appear,
the most recent among Davao-specific publications, describe a migrant story of hard times and success alongside the Japanese in pre-war Davao. Among particular biographies of Filipino pioneer families published by later-generation family members, notable for their meticulous research are those by Dennis R. Garcia (2005) and Monina S. Magallanes (2011). These books, together with the published memoir of Rogelio Lizada (2002), provide a wealth of personal details about the mentalities of Filipinos who lived through the transformation of the Davao wilderness, as the abaca frontier was opened up and developed.

b. Histories of the American West and Empire

Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis provides valuable insight into understanding contemporaneous American policy in Davao within the context of the formation of the frontier and empire. Turner’s thesis rests on the premise of the evolution of an egalitarian frontier in American history. It also celebrates the rugged individualism of the pioneer settler, and his ability to dominate and transform the natural world to satisfy his needs. Turner proclaimed for an American public in search of a national history, what Theodore Roosevelt stated was a thought that had been “floating around rather loosely.” For Roosevelt and the many that enthusiastically embraced Turner’s thesis, this was the generation that had experienced in the “days of their youth...forms of frontier life [that] still dominated local society.” For this reason, this fin-de-siecle American public had developed nostalgia for a frontier that had been deemed a thing of the past by the 1890 U.S. Census Report. Thus, for an America coming of age in a world still dominated by European powers, Turner’s thesis about American character and identity forged on the frontier, was embraced as distinctly home-grown. By stressing the singularity of the frontier in the history of the United States, Turner made Americans feel exceptional in relation to their Old World European cousins. In Turner, America found its own national history, and its newfound place on the world stage.

So large was the shadow Turner cast in American historiography that disciples and critics continue to debate his thesis in scholarly circles until recent times. Turner’s thesis influenced a generation of frontier historians, especially after the Second World

---

War when America became the dominant world power. Chief among the neo-Turnerians was Ray Allen Billington (1956) who strengthened the connection between the idea of the egalitarian frontier and American Exceptionalism. Billington, in his discourse on the role of the American West in shaping the American values of equality and democracy, added ideological strength and confidence to the United States’ struggle against communism in the Cold War era.

In the 1980s, however, historians began to examine the frontier with a more critical eye, and Turner’s triumphalist approach to frontier history was challenged by new scholarship. Turner was reinterpreted by William McNeill (1983), revised by Patricia Limerick (1987), and expanded upon by the post-Western histories of Ronald Takaki (1990), David Wrobel and Michael Steiner (1997), and Dorothy Fujita-Rony (2003), among others.

McNeill stated that Turner’s 1890s thesis, focusing on the character of the frontier as egalitarian and original in American history and thought, was a “romantic delusion.” He further argued that the American frontier experience was not unique, and that there were other comparable frontiers in other parts of the world, including Russia, South America, South Africa and Australia. These frontiers had shared similar patterns of encounters and settlement with that of America. McNeill critiqued American exceptionalism and the concept of Manifest Destiny by describing the broad patterns, parallelisms and connections between these frontiers and a highly urbanized Europe. His (1983) book paid homage to Walter Prescott Webb’s (1952) earlier landmark work of the same title, *The Great Frontier*. Webb’s concept of the frontier was global, underlined by the workings of the world economy that brought windfall profits to the European metropolis. It is not surprising that Webb’s ideas were formed in part during the Great Depression, as he had written his earlier book *The Great Plains: A Study in Institutions and Environment* about the structural history of the American West in 1931.

Following McNeill’s more critical comparative perspective, Limerick (1987) viewed the American frontier as contested and violent, often driven by economic forces rather than egalitarian pioneering. Departing from Turner, and utilizing a socio-economic analysis, Limerick stated that the frontier has not closed, but is still very much part of American life. These critiques of the Turner thesis would gain enough traction to establish New Western History as a discipline that departs from the
nostalgic view of an all-white, mostly-male American frontier history. Takaki (1990) introduced a post-Western picture of a multi-cultural Asian-American frontier, as opposed to the dominant West of the imagination as white America. Among the ‘strangers from a different shore’ were the Filipino migrant workers in the Hawaiian plantations, as well as fruit and vegetable pickers in the California orchards. While in 1997, the contributors to Wrobel and Steiner’s Many Wests revised perceptions of the American frontier in terms of the environment, cosmopolitanism and material culture.

Fujita-Rony (2003) expanded the concept of the West of the imagination in her history of transpacific America in the early twentieth century. Her work studied Filipino migrants whose easy access to America was facilitated by the Philippines’ status as a colony. By first locating America’s presence across the Pacific in the Philippines, Fujita-Rony then used the Pacific Northwest city of Seattle as a Philippine-American hub, depicting another West, and by doing so, she elevated the stature of Seattle as a transpacific metropole. Fujita-Rony analyzed the politics of place, class and gender in the movement of Filipinos passing through Seattle between the Philippines, California and Alaska. She depicts the creation of an expatriate Filipino culture through the lives of workers, labor activists, labor recruiters, and students in a Philippine Seattle. By traversing the boundaries of geography and culture, Filipinos in America were creators of a new identity. Having experienced an American-style education in the Philippines, they were familiar with American language and culture, but found the American ideals of equality and civil rights contrasting with the harsh realities of the discriminatory laws in California and other States.

Transpacific and imperial America is not a new reality. But laymen and scholars alike did not always view American history through an imperial lens. Instead, exceptionalism was the received wisdom and standard perspective, whereby the United States was seen to offer democracy and liberty to the world, in contrast with the European powers during the era of High Imperialism, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. William Appleman Williams’ (1955) treatise on U.S. economic imperialism was an early dissenting view, but Cold War politics prevented most scholars from tackling the subject of empire head-on. After the Berlin Wall fell, Amy Kaplan’s (1993) critique of the ‘absence of empire’ in American cultural studies marked
a turning point, as she urged scholars to face the fact that an American empire still exists, after almost a century of denial.\textsuperscript{41}

A decade later, the first volumes to systematically analyze the nature of American imperialism from a global viewpoint were published. The essays in \textit{The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives}, edited by Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (2003), presented the American presence in the Philippines in a comparative context, exploring political influences inside and outside the United States in crafting policy for the colonial Philippines.\textsuperscript{42} While Go and Foster examined international factors and their impacts upon Philippine colonial history, McCoy and Scarrano’s (2009) \textit{Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State} analyzed the reverse impact of America’s colonial tropics upon the United States. The essays in both \textit{The American Colonial State in the Philippines} and \textit{Colonial Crucible} tackled American imperialism head-on, by “placing the question of empire at the heart” of Philippine and American historiography.\textsuperscript{43} The latter volume contains the work of scholars studying America’s colonial peripheries, namely Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama and the Philippines, capturing the “nuances of structure and agency within societies subjected” to American power.\textsuperscript{44} But once again, the treatment of Empire has inadvertently left out Davao’s connections to the imperial metropoles, unlike Havana, Manila or Zamboanga.

Consequently, this study on the evolution of Davao offers a partial remedy to this absence, while also contributing to the current discourse and research on the nature of imperial America and its transpacific frontier. But equally important, this thesis, by studying a Philippine region in the first half of the twentieth century, utilizes the approach used by Williams on the economy and Kaplan on culture, to locate the Philippines within the broader fields of both American history and cultural studies.

\section*{3. Method and Approach}

This thesis combines the use of documents, oral history, ethnography, and visual images to research and unite an economic and cultural history of Davao. Several works serve as guides in their particular use and interpretation of sources. On documentary evidence, \textit{The Death of Woman Wang} by Jonathan Spence (1978) shows how court cases, legal documents and literary texts illumine how ordinary people lived in a time
of change. James Francis Warren’s (1981) use of slave accounts in *The Sulu Zone* demonstrates how to piece together the collective biography of peoples “from the other side” of society, whom traditional history has often overlooked. While Daniel Chew’s (1990) *Chinese Pioneers on the Sarawak Frontier 1841-1941*, uses ethnographic interviews to supplement documentary records in writing a history of several ethnic Chinese groups on a riverine frontier in West Borneo.

On visual imagery, Warren’s (1986, 1993, 2008) history of coolies and prostitutes in Singapore illustrates how a careful reading of photographs can inform the historical narrative, especially in relation to the context and individual subject. While Michael Adas (2006) in *Dominance by Design* utilizes woodblock prints, paintings and photographs to examine the connection between grand ideas and America’s drive for hegemony, especially the imperative for progress and innovation. Whenever a photograph or image is used in this thesis, Susan Sontag’s (1977) advice that a photograph is both a subjective image and documentary evidence, is well-worth noting.

a. **Commodity-based approach**

Since this thesis aims to connect wider political and economic structures with individual lives, a commodity-based approach is important for writing the narrative and analysis. The study of a commodity such as abaca – the processes of its production and trade – can be used to analyze the history of the settlement and development of Davao. A commodity-based approach can study the political economy of infrastructure, such as the development and role of roads and ports, and it can also examine aspects of cosmopolitanism as observed in people’s developing tastes and practices. Focusing on commodity deals with the cultural aspects of society and avoids

---


2 One of the leading theoreticians of the commodity-based approach is Arjun Appadurai (1986) who reflected on the histories of objects. Appadurai noted that objects are not ‘inert and mute,’ rather, they are more like persons, with their ability to act and communicate. Igor Kopytoff (1986) further suggested that it is possible to write about the biography of a thing because it undergoes several changes in meaning, value and identity over its lifespan. Due to its temporal nature, an object can also be a subject of history in material culture. Ultimately, it is important to remember Kopytoff’s comments that an object can be understood as having similar traits to people, precisely because it is related to people. Since commodities exist in society, so can society order, constrain and/or construct the identities of commodities, just like what societies do to people. (Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai and Prasannan Parthasarathi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4; Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodization as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–94.)
reductionist criticisms, namely the absence of agency, often ascribed to structural history.$^{50}$

The commodity-based approach to world history$^k$ is utilized to great effect in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* by Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (2009).$^{51}$ Cotton signifies the global connections and exchanges across the globe, and down through the centuries, linking the trade, technology, economy, politics, fashion and consumption patterns of Asia and Europe. While there is no book$^l$ on abaca similar to what has been done for cotton on a global scale, there is one study that employs abaca to analyze the history of a Philippine region. Norman Owen’s (1984) *Prosperity without progress: Manila hemp and material life in colonial Philippines* describes and analyzes how Manila hemp wove the many aspects of Bicol history together in order to expose the structures of dependence in this southeastern Luzon region which reached all the way to Manila, Madrid, Boston and London.$^{52}$ Owen’s Kabikolan, however, stands a stark contrast to Davao, which had a different trajectory of growth.

In a sense, the commodity approach combines structure and agency because it studies how Filipino individuals coped with structural forces and made-do on an emergent frontier, creating a new hybrid culture in the process. Such an approach entails the use of micro-narratives, the “telling of a story about ordinary people in their local setting,” while set against the larger backdrop of the structures of imperialism and global trade.$^{53}$ Investigating the economy from a cultural standpoint through the use of material culture thus makes possible the best of both worlds — a

---


$l$ Abaca’s own commercial past is chronicled in Elizabeth Potter Sievert, *The Story of Abaca: Manila Hemp’s Transformation from Textile to Marine Cordage and Specialty Paper* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009). This book documents the beginnings of the plant and fiber, including its methods of production and uses within the Philippines and abroad, as told through the accounts of several merchant and manufacturing companies. Geographically, the book covers all abaca-growing regions in the Philippines, including Davao, but the focus is on the present abaca-growing regions of Bicol and Leyte.
histoire totale that does not make the people involved insignificant. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins’ crucial point that there is a ‘dialectical relationship’ between events and structures is applied here, in this re-conceptualized history of Davao and its place in Philippine and world history.54

b. Towards Hybridity

In an attempt to analyze the structural and human patterns and processes of Davao’s growth across the decades, this thesis utilizes the notion of cultural hybridity as an aspect of an over-arching framework. The theme of hybridity is appropriate when analyzing the history of Davao in the first half of the twentieth century. Davao was established due to various forces both structural and personal in their nature. On the one hand, there were the structures and processes of the global economy and imperialism, and on the other hand, the settlement experience which was the result of thousands of individuals making their own personal decisions on migration, livelihood and everyday practices. For understanding both these institutional forces and individual choices, Cultural Hybridity, Peter Burke’s 2009 treatise, provides a broad theoretical overview of the field.55

When discussing responses to cultural imports, Burke enumerates four types, namely: acceptance, rejection, segregation and adaptation.56 When discussing the first response of acceptance, the concept of “fashion for the foreign” is invoked. Burke explains how Westernization caught the imagination of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Japan, and China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but especially in Rio de Janerio, where the upper-classes were dressing in the London fashion of woollen clothes despite the tropical weather of Brazil.57 In Davao, there were cases of multi-national children dressed in Filipino clothes, while there were also cases of Filipinos wearing Japanese garb and ‘modern’ American dresses. The desire for the foreign also extended to food, magazines and music.58 The third response, segregation, denotes only borrowing some aspects of foreign culture, while excluding others, but it has a tendency to merge into adaptation, the fourth response.59 Burke defines adaptation as borrowing piecemeal, or lifting an item out of its original setting and modifying it in a process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization.60 This process is universal, and timeless, as we have learned from the seemingly ordinary objects that were created out of European and Aborigine contact in Australia since the eighteenth century, or from much earlier
periods, such as the Sphinx of Taharqo in the 8th century BCE which combined Kushite and Egyptian features.\textsuperscript{61}

In terms of the effects of cultural exchanges on society as a whole, Burke posits four scenarios: a) homogenization or the meltdown of different cultures – a consequence of globalization that many people today both expect and fear; b) resistance or ‘counter-globalization’; c) ‘cultural diglossia’ or living a double, bi-cultural life in the process of participating in a world culture while retaining a local culture; and d) the rise of new syntheses.\textsuperscript{62} Of these four possibilities, the last two scenarios are more applicable to Davao. Residents of Davao in the early 1900s, led not only bicultural, but multicultural lives. They participated in the Hispanic, American, and Japanese cultures while living the meaning of their own Filipino lives, sometimes separately, but increasingly creating in the process a new synthesis. By absorbing, ordering and re-ordering these various cultures with their Filipino one, as signified through particular objects of material culture and the practices of everyday life, this framework is helpful in studying the emergent hybrid culture of the Davao frontier.\textsuperscript{63}

Moreover, utilizing the notion of cultural hybridity allows this thesis to come full circle by introducing an American frontier-borderland narrative into Davao history. Borderlands histories, as defined by Hamalainen and Johnson (2012), “focus on places of encounter” whether in relation to contemporary international borders or on older meeting grounds.\textsuperscript{64} The history of American borderlands is a history of contact zones where no single group ruled supreme, even involving colonial empires and indigenous territories. The Davao of the first half of the twentieth century was one such contact zone, where “people and their institutions and traditions come together, creating distinctive ways of organizing space and transforming the seemingly fixed edges of empire and nations into fluid spaces.”\textsuperscript{65} By studying the frontier borderland, the social history of the “common people” can be written, focusing not on divisions or demarcations of the state and its laws, but rather on the mobility of the people and the nature of exchanges in the cultural and economic spheres of an urbanizing frontier society.\textsuperscript{66}

As noted by Burke (2009) and others, the development of a creole or syncretic border culture often posed a challenge to central government control. The state frequently took measures to suppress or limit these cultures. In Davao history, the Manila-based government’s creation of the ‘Davao Land Problem’ issue and the
subsequent cancellation of land applications can be interpreted as the state’s attempt to control an unruly frontier. Beyond the political and juridical, historians must look at the social, cultural and economic dynamics of borderlands and the historical transformations that they have experienced.67 Baud and van Schendel (2012) have argued that “massive transnational migration” usually diminishes the power of the state. The geographical zone of what they term a “border heartland” is where social networks are shaped by the realities of the border. These social networks, more than the state, determine the lifelines of the border inhabitants as they continually adapt to the changes happening in their midst.68

Foregrounding people, instead of state power, in the narrative brings the message of Graybill and Johnson (2012) into sharp focus. Their essay view borderland history as an alternative perspective to the narrowness of nationalist historiographies, as the latter minimizes transnational and non-national developments, and obscures the extent to which nations themselves are shaped by larger processes – such as migration, commerce, technology and the power of ideas.69 These dynamics, are precisely what this thesis explores. Building on the work of North American borderland historians, this research carries their ideas across the Pacific, situating them on the great island of Mindanao. As Graybill and Johnson notes, it is time that the spotlight is cast on the cultural hybridity that exists in borderlands, to complement the accepted narrative of the border as a zone of conflict between nation-states, while also being more critical of nation-centered histories present in much of the U.S. (and Philippine) literature.70 This can be done by exploring borders “through the lenses of cultural and intellectual – as well as social and political – history in exploring the relationship between borders as places and borders as ideas and symbols.”71

The overall view on cultural hybridity in conceptualizing a city under colonial rule is achieved in a recent study of three cities in mainland Southeast Asia. Su Lin Lewis’ (2016) *Cities in Motion: Urban life and cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920-1940*, affirms the centrality of this thesis’ themes of cosmopolitanism and hybridity in its study of Penang, Rangoon and Bangkok, especially in utilizing civic organizations, playgrounds, classrooms, and cinema halls.72 While the center of gravity for the three continental southeast Asian cities was directed toward Britain and Europe, their middle-class inhabitants still bore striking similarities to American Davao with the
emergence of broad, multicultural, and civic imaginings over “ethnic nationalism” during the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{73}

In terms of the relevance of Lewis’ book for this thesis, it was no accident that the global reach of American popular culture, through magazines, music and film, helped homogenize, to a certain degree, the interwar experience among cosmopolitan cities across Southeast Asia. But such similarities end with particular material objects as bearers of the multicultural modern. The people appropriating these objects and the meaning they placed on their experience varied according to the distinctiveness of their individual and collective histories and perspectives.\textsuperscript{M}

Situating this thesis within the wider context of cosmopolitanism and hybridity provides an alternative to the nationalist historiography of current Philippine scholarship.\textsuperscript{N} It is not surprising that the international linkages and cosmopolitanism that Benedict Anderson stressed in *Imagined Communities* (1983) was achieved for the Philippines in *Under Three Flags* (2005).\textsuperscript{74} It is time that a history of the Philippines transcends the narrowness of the nationalist discourse. Hence, to a certain extent, this thesis on the transpacific, transnational and transcultural aspects of the Philippines in the creation of Davao as a global entrepôt pushes for new directions in Philippine historical studies.

\textsuperscript{M} This is most apparent in the authoritarian, even ethnically discriminatory, paths the nations represented by the cities, Penang (Malaysia), Rangoon (Myanmar) and Bangkok (Thailand), took when compared to Davao (Philippines) history. But then, the theme of a cosmopolitan past as championed by *Cities in Motion* may well lend inspiration for progressive reforms in these very nations.

\textsuperscript{N} Philippine nationalist historiography can trace its beginnings to the 1880s when Europe-based Filipino propagandists started questioning Spain’s right to rule over the Philippines. Among the products of this propaganda movement was Jose Rizal’s annotations on Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1890) as a defense of Filipino identity against Spanish superiority. Nationalist scholarly publications took a back seat in the first half of the twentieth century, while its various permutations in the guise of conventional and guerilla wars, and political debate raged in the American half-century. Nationalist scholarship returned to the forefront in the post-colonial era of the 1950s. Among its contemporaries, Teodoro Agoncillo’s (1956) *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* stands out as an attempt to criticize the continued influence of the United States through its close ties with the Philippine ruling class, in its depiction of Bonifacio as an anti-colonial working class hero. Agoncillo’s heirs were Renato Constantino (1975) and Zeus Salazar (1991), the main proponents of this nationalist discourse from the 1970s to the 1990s, when Philippine society, particularly its youth, were questioning Philippine identity in the midst of American hegemony in the Philippines, at the height of the Marcos dictatorship and the Cold War. (Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de Las Islas Filipinas*, ed. Jose Rizal (Paris: Libreria de Garnier Hermanos, 1890), https://archive.org/details/ahz9387.0001.001.umich.edu; Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1956); Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing, 1975); Zeus Salazar, “Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang Diskursong Pangkabhihasnan,” in *Pilipinolohiya: Kasaysayan, Pilosopiya at Pananaliksik*, ed. Violeta V. Bautista and Rogelia Pe-Pua (Manila: Kalikasan Press, 1991), 46–72.)
4. Significance and Contribution

From personal experience, mainstream, nationalist Philippine history, particularly those courses taught in the school system, hardly mention the Davao region. This is due to a historical vacuum when it comes to framing the accounts of Filipinos in Davao. The exclusion of Davao in the history of the Philippine nation tends to reinforce the notion of Davao as a distant periphery. And this idea is quite misleading, especially when it comes to recognizing Davao’s position in the Philippines today – which includes its most competitive city,\(^\text{O}\) and the Philippine’s second most populous metropolitan area.\(^\text{p}\)

To understand its present success, it is important to go back to Davao’s beginnings and study its foundational character; the challenges it faced and how it adapted and thrived. Davao’s history is the story of a frontier and the transformation of its people, and how its multicultural inhabitants faced the challenges both natural and man-made in pursuit of their frontier dreams. There is a need here to invert the perspective. Excluding Davao from the still largely Tagalog-based, Manila-centric national story makes Philippine history, simply, incomplete and myth-ridden.

Indeed, Davao history has not only been situated on the periphery of Philippine studies, but also within Mindanao studies itself, locating it on the margin of a periphery! Most studies about Mindanao deal with the western part of the island, which is Muslim Mindanao, where conflicts and accommodation between government forces and separatist groups have taken place since the Spanish period. Davao, on the other hand, has seemed comparatively peaceful and uneventful when compared to the history of its western neighbor.


\(^\text{p}\) According to 2015 Census Data, Davao City has the third largest population, next to Quezon City and the City of Manila. The Davao Region ranked seventh among the most populous regions in the country, and the first among other Mindanao regions. Lisa Grace S. Bersales, “Highlights of the Philippine Population 2015 Census of Population,” Census (Philippine Statistics Authority, May 19, 2016), http://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2015-census-population.
Davao’s past was considered uninteresting from a purely national-colonial standpoint, if published works are used as a barometer. There have been exhaustive histories written about the Japanese in Davao, and about its indigenous tribes, but nothing comparable on the Filipino settlers, despite being the most numerous inhabitants during Davao’s foundational period. Partly due to the absence of the Filipino in its history, partly because of its allegedly uneventful past and partly due to its peripheral position vis-à-vis Manila, scholarly work on Davao have hardly merited national interest. Thus, by researching and writing about Davao’s multicultural and hybrid past that still informs its present, this thesis attempts to reframe Davao’s localized position in order to present a hitherto unexposed aspect of the Philippine past. Davao is a significant place, historically speaking. It was at once global and local, and consequently provides an alternative case study to the more narrow nationalist perspective still prevalent in Philippine historiography today.

Furthermore, because this thesis studies a Philippine frontier during the period of American colonial rule, the New Western/borderlands/frontier history of the United States features more prominently. By analyzing aspects of the multinational and multicultural dimensions of America’s so-called ‘western frontier’ in the Philippines, this thesis contributes to the on-going discourse about American frontier history, as first developed by Turner in the 1890s, and re-conceptualized by mostly U.S.-based scholars of the New Western and Borderlands histories in the 1980s to the present. Thus, this thesis hopes to reshape and expand New Western history in crossing the Pacific and locating America’s history within the transnational-local context of Davao, as an integral part of America’s trans-Pacific empire.

Consequently, this thesis contributes to the broader fields of global, economic and cultural histories, using a commodity-based approach. Surveying the field of scholarship on Davao, most works, with few exceptions, overlook the global forces at work in its local-global history. This thesis positions transnational exchanges at the heart of the creation of Davao, a so-called colonial periphery, yet actively engaged with the world at large, economically and culturally. By exploring Davao’s interactions with world market forces through the international quest for naval materials as well as the consumption of household goods, it combines commodity-based history with global history.
The lessons to be learned from studying this Philippine region’s history is now, more than ever, relevant in the world we live in today, where a multi-cultural Asia-Pacific is seen as a key actor in global affairs. In our present world, where the politics and economy of Asia is becoming a global focus and an international concern, my thesis highlights how multicultural peoples managed to live and work together on a developing Asian frontier. At a time when the forces of globalization are both welcomed and feared, this study about pioneering frontier settlement, urban development, an interconnected regional-global economy and the ensuing hybrid culture it created, provides crucial insight into a world where the local thrived alongside the foreign on an emergent frontier under colonial rule.

5. Thesis Structure

The thesis has eight chapters, organized into three main parts about an idea, a crop, and the culture created from the encounter between the local and the foreign in the emerging Davao region. The first part sets the stage, connecting Davao frontier’s indigenous and Spanish past with the late nineteenth century arrival of the Americans, and their notions of scientific progress and economic development tied to a manifest destiny. The second part on abaca, weaves together the global web of economic networks and human connections, as well as the hub of Davao City and the hinterlands, through the production and marketing of an export commodity. Finally, the third part explores the material culture and socio-cultural interactions in cosmopolitan Davao’s various contact zones in the period under investigation.

---

14 Modesto Farolan, The Davao Problem (Manila, 1935), 41–42.
19 Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Murdoch University, 1984).
20 Lydia N. Yu Jose, Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944 (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992).
22 Abinales, Making Mindanao: Davao and Cotabato in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State.
50; Shinzo Hayase, Mindanao Ethnohistory beyond Nations: Maguindanao, Sangir and Bagobo Societies in East Maritime Southeast Asia, Mindanao Studies Series (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007).


25 Gloria Dabbay, Davao City: Its History and Progress, Expanded Edition (Davao City, Philippines: Self Published, 1995); Ernesto Corcino, Davao History (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998).


27 Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005).

28 Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002); R. Dennis J. Garcia, Davao Pioneers and Public Servants (Davao City, Philippines: Leon and Milagros Garcia Foundation, 2005); Monina Suarez Magallanes, Sang Una... (Once upon a Time) (Davao City, Philippines: Monina Suarez Magallanes, 2011).

29 Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw.


38 David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner, Many Wests: Place, Culture and Regional Identity (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997).


44 Ibid., 6.


Prostitutes and Pullers: Explorations in the Ethno- and Social History of Southeast Asia (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2008), 173–97.


54 Ibid., 296.


56 Ibid., 79–101.

57 Ibid., 79.


59 Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*, 91.

60 Ibid., 93.


63 Ibid., 114.


65 Ibid.


67 Ibid., 13.

68 Ibid., 6.


70 Ibid., 31.

71 Ibid., 39.


73 Ibid., 9–13.

Part I

AN IDEA
Map 1.1. The Philippines, Southeast Asia and neighbors
CHAPTER 1
DAVAO: ON THE PERIPHERY OF TWO EMPIRES

1. First peoples

Archaeological findings show that people have lived in southeastern Mindanao since the Neolithic period based on stone and shell flake tools found in Talikud Island dated 2700 BC. However, little is known about them. More information on early southern Mindanao inhabitants during the Metal Age – between 1000 BC and 1000 AD – is revealed through burial pottery discovered on the Davao west coast, with some artifact made as late as 500 AD. Various gravesites located in the Ayub Cave, Sarangani contained earthenware pottery urns with anthropomorphic lids exhibiting facial expressions such as crying and smiling. In the Ayub site, these grave goods comprised “earthenware pottery with cord-marked and incised decorations, glass beads, glass bracelets, earthenware beads, shell implements, shell ornaments and iron blades.” Based on some two hundred objects found in and around the vicinity of Ayub Cave, archaeologists noted that the significant differences in the number and quality of each grave site suggest several distinct status hierarchies in Metal Age Mindanao society.

Another archaeological site along the southern Davao Gulf coast – Asin Cave, Jose Abad Santos – shows that Davao Metal Age pottery, with its design of painted curvilinear interlocking scrolls, share a common Sahuynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition with objects unearthed in the Visayas and Palawan. Unlike in Ayub Cave, no anthropomorphic pottery was found in the Asin Cave. However, the combined results of archaeological sites in Sarangani, Davao del Sur, and other sites in Davao City and Davao Oriental, indicate that the Metal Age inhabitants of the Davao region made and used pottery, including burial pottery.

The practice of burying the dead with grave goods continued for almost 1200 years, but for reasons unknown, this practice stopped around 500 AD. In seeking to explain why it stopped, Macario Tiu utilized indigenous creation myths and fieldwork

---

A This practice of burying the dead accompanied with “grave goods” is also observed in Negros, Sorsogon and Palawan. (Laura Lee Junker, Raiding, Trading and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 168–170.)
Map 1.2. Southeastern Mindanao and pre-historic excavation sites.
interviews with various tribal peoples in the area. He posits that in 500 AD, the interruption in Davao was brought about by the invasion of “warlike tribes.” It is assumed that before the invasion, there was relative peace in the area. In particular, Tiu believed that the people who made the pottery in the Sarangani area were Bilaans, until the warlike Mandayans from Davao Oriental and the Manobos from the Butuan-Agusan area, came south to the Davao Gulf. Furthermore, using linguistic studies, Tiu explained that at least until the beginning of the early modern era, the major tribes found around Davao were the Manobos to the north, the Mandayas to the east, the Bilaans to the south and the Negritos and Atas in the center, which were their approximate locations at the point of European contact.

a. A ‘mezclar las razas’

European impressions of settlement patterns prior to the nineteenth century usually viewed Davao as sparsely populated by the “Moros.” These early impressions were based on European travel accounts of seafarers and explorers who visited the Davao Gulf area. Sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions under Magellan, Loaisa, and Villalobos traded with peoples in the area around Davao, especially in the Sarangani Islands. In 1579, the intrepid English seafarer Francis Drake, “anchored and watered” in the Davao Gulf area without encountering any inhabitants, and only saw coastal communities when he sailed along Sarangani. While the 1703 account of explorer

---

9 Tiu considers the Mandaya, the Manobo and the Ata as the three main branches from where the many tribes of Davao originated, while the Bilaans, Giangans and Sangils comprised the other minor tribes. (Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 91–92.)

C The term “Moro” is derived from the Spanish word for the Moors who the Spaniards fought in their Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, in the sixteenth century, when the Spaniards encountered the Mohammedan peoples of the Philippines, themselves converts to Islam, the word Moro was used to describe the latter. (James Francis Warren, “Moro,” ed. Ainslie T. Embree, Encyclopedia of Asian History (New York: The Asia Society, Charles Scribner’s Sons, Macmillian Publishing Co., 1988); James Francis Warren, “Moro Wars,” ed. Ainslie T. Embree, Encyclopedia of Asian History (New York: The Asia Society, Charles Scribner’s Sons, Macmillian Publishing Co., 1988), 40-41.)

D Their initial impressions of Davao are echoed in the interpretation of the island’s geography as well. Hakluyt’s sixteenth century account considered the southeastern Mindanao tips of cape of San Agustin and Glen, respectively on the east and west coast of Davao Gulf, as islands together with Samal, Talikud. (William A. Lessa, “Drake in the South Seas,” in Sir Francis Drake and the Famous Voyage, 1577-1580: Essays Comemorating the Quadricentennial of Drake’s Circumnavigation of the Earth, ed. Norman J.W. Thower (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 69.) Schreurs comments that early maps, including those of the eighteenth century, “look as if they had been drawn by men who were too scared to come really close to the spot and have a good look around the southeast corner of Mindanao.” (Peter Schreurs, MSC, Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispoinization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, University of San Carlos, 1989), 212.)
and buccaneer William Dampier mistakenly labeled the people of Mindanao as being “of one Religion, which is Mahometanism.” By the nineteenth century, however, with the onset of the Spanish colonization of Davao in 1847, those at the colonizing forefront soon became aware of the diverse nature of the population. One of the early Spanish missionaries of Davao, the Jesuit Quirico More, Superior of the mission, wrote in 1864:

I have read some statistical works, both official and semi-official, which treat of the population of this gulf, and I have noticed that in general more importance is given to the Moros of this district than is theirs, and a greater number of people than in reality exists. The reason for this error lies in the fact that the Moros quite regularly live along the coasts and at the mouths of the large rivers, while the heathens of other races live as a general rule in the interior of the island. Consequently, the Moros form, as it were, a sort of barrier or screen which prevents the heathens from being seen...

To European eyes, the coastal Muslim population held center stage in Mindanao because of their reputation as commodity traders and slave raiders, which they thought to be the same case in Davao too. But those who traveled in the Davao Gulf area would soon note the difference. Based on his 1880 visit to Davao, Frenchman Joseph Montano described the Davao Moros as less fanatical and less daring compared to the Taosug in Sulu, because they were geographically dispersed in the Gulf area and were few in numbers. At the time of Montano’s visit, many of the Davao Muslims had already submitted to Spanish rule and converted to Catholicism or had relocated to Cotabato or Sarangani.

The first accounts of the hill tribes, the so-called indigenous “screened heathens” of Fr. More, only become available from the late nineteenth century, as they start coming down to the coast, and missionaries, explorers, and early ethnographers started going up into the hills. By then, these Europeans in Davao may have experienced a sense of déjà vu, similar to what their sixteenth-century forefathers felt when they first came in contact with Southeast Asia, namely, overwhelmed by the sheer diversity of peoples, their different features, the myriad languages, and variety of socio-cultural practices.

Davao was especially noted by the Spaniards as having the most number of tribes anywhere in the Philippines. Joaquin Rajal, the Spanish governor of Davao between 1879 and 1883, remarked upon the difficulty of delineating the ethnographic
characteristics of the Davao tribes, which he attributed to centuries of inter-racial mingling among tribal peoples, the impact of Muslim slave raiders, and the general character of the slave traffic, that produced this “mezclar las razas [mix of races].” Written documents, folktales, and genealogies indicate at least one tribe of Davao, the Sangir, having a shared heritage with the people of the Sangihe Islands group that lies between Davao and the Moluccas, as far back as the seventeenth century.

Those who initially studied the indigenous peoples of Davao gave them various names and ascribed varying numbers of tribes. One of the earliest accounts to be published was Joseph Montano’s 1886 visit to Davao. The French explorer mentioned ten tribes of “Infieles” Bagobos, Atas-Negritos, Moros, Tagabawas, Guiangas, Samales, Bilaans, Mandayas, Manobos and Tagacaolos, after classifying all Mindanao inhabitants under four racial categories (Bisayas, Malais or Moros, Chinese, and Infieles). Jose Rizal’s friend, the Austrian scholar Ferdinand Blumentritt, in an 1890 article “Las razas indegenes de Filipinas,” mentioned 14 tribes in Davao. The following year, the Spanish Governor Rajal, enumerated 12 tribes in his treatise on Davao published in Madrid. American anthropologist Fay-Cooper Cole (1913), after his pioneering fieldwork in the Philippines, listed 38 variations of the names of Davao tribes but classified them into six main groups, the Bagobo, Bilaan, Kulaman, Tagacaolo, Ata, and Mandaya. In 1916, Fr. Pablo Pastells, a Spanish Jesuit and historian, who was once assigned to Mindanao, named nine indigenous tribes in his book on the Jesuits in Mindanao. Post-World War II Jesuit anthropologist, Frank Lynch, listed ten major tribes in Davao, based on his interpretation of the multi-volume Jesuit Letters of Mindanao published between 1877 and 1895. Davao historian Ernesto Corcino described 15 tribes based on earlier ethnographic studies, and

---

Map 1.3. Cole’s map of the location of the different tribes of Davao, 1913. 26
Macario Tiu noted that official ethnography counts 15 different tribes in Davao, while he lists a total of 25 tribes before classifying them under six groups of major (Mandaya, Manobo, and Ata) and minor (Bilaans, Giangans, Sangils) tribes.  

Of the various ethnic groups found in Davao, there were seven that all writers since the late nineteenth century included in their classification. These are the Atas, Bagobos, Bilaans, Guiangas, Mandayas, Manobos and Tagacaolos. In addition to these seven tribes, there are the island-dwelling Samals who were mentioned by seven out of the eight authors. Only Cole did not include the Samals in his study.

b. Hunters, foragers, and traders

In general, the indigenous tribes of Davao lived a semi-nomadic existence by hunting, foraging, practicing swidden agriculture, and trading. They hunted wild boar and deer by the use of wooden traps, and birds with bows and arrows made from *palma brava*, as well as nets and wooden decoys. They foraged in the forests for wax, honey, and resin called almaciga, and cinnamon. Agriculture only played a supplementary role as they preferred to forage and hunt, more than to plant. Through *kaingin* farming, they grew rice and root crops. With slight variations among the tribes, the constellations and climate guided their timing of when to move, clear a field and start planting. The first acts of planting were usually begun with a ceremonial ritual led by elders and witnessed by the whole community. They cleared land by burning grasses and trees to plant a variety of upland rice that can grow with minimal irrigation. When *cogon* grasses begin to grow in their fields, they shifted their crop to sweet potatoes or abaca. Over time, when the cogon overpowered their crops, they went in search of another patch of forest land to clear.

By necessity, as shifting cultivators, and hunters and gatherers, their villages, called *rancherias* by the Spanish missionaries, were temporary dwelling places. In these *rancherias*, the common features were raised platform dwellings, which were often one-room affairs constructed from materials readily found in nearby surroundings – such as *palma brava*, *runo*, bamboo and nipa. A few home accessories were decorated with gold extracted from the rivers of the Kingking mountains. From abaca that grew wild in the area, they made their mats of fine
workmanship with designs of crocodiles, birds, and idols. Nevertheless, the indigenous tribes did not barter abaca, but only used it for their own consumption.

The tropical forest provided for most of their needs, but what they did not produce or forage, they procured through reciprocity and trade. Trade had been practiced before the Europeans came to the Davao area. First contact European accounts indicate that the peoples of the Davao Gulf region, and Sarangani is specifically named, traded with the Malayo-Muslim people of Brunei and Sulawesi and the Chinese from Fukien who came to the Mindanao coasts in their prahus and junks. Sixteenth century Spanish reports described the natives of Sarangani, adorned with gold and jewels, using porcelain wares and brass gongs, and wearing “perfumes of musk, amber, civet, officinal storax, and other aromatic and resinous” scents which they buy from the Chinese traders who visited annually.

In the 1860s, the tribes of the Pacific coast of Davao were known to trade wax, almaciga, sea urchins, mastic, cinnamon, palay, bird’s nests, cacao, coffee, abaca and sugar in exchange for plates, granite stones, lengths of thick yellow copper wire and textiles. Gongs, jars, porcelain plates, Borneo ivory, and even a jacket made from Javanese batik cloth and a belt buckle from Perak, procured from Chinese and Muslim traders in the late nineteenth century were considered “prized heirlooms,” and as objects used in ceremonial life by the Bagobo community.

c. Borrowings within and without

In the highly mobile maritime world of the Davao Gulf region, the exchange of people and culture went hand in hand with exchange of goods that connected those living in different parts of the Davao area into one trading system and zone. Through trading and exchanging objects, the upland tribes participated in the material culture of the wider world outside the shores of the Davao Gulf, and connected with the maritime littoral world of the Sulu Zone and beyond. Ideas, design and aspects of culture were conveyed via objects traded, and the meaning and use of these objects changed as they moved from one place to another, and from one group of people to another.

Gongs were described by the Europeans as “bells which are different from ours and which they esteem highly in their festivities.” (B&R v.2, 68.)
The ethnic and material complexities and exchanges that early visitors noted were given special attention in Fay-Cooper Cole’s 1913 monograph, one of the first thoroughly anthropological studies to be undertaken on Davao tribes. Cole took note of the extensive borrowings and practices that one tribe had with another, in terms of their dwellings, language, weaving methods, and metallurgical craftsmanship. He noted that while the fundamentals were essentially the same, individual tribes were distinguishable in the stylized designs of their weapons, jewelry and clothing. Cole also noted the Bagobo technique of over-sewing before dying a textile was borrowed from the Kulaman and Tagacaolo tribes, while the Bagobo brass and copper designs suggested borrowings from Bornean and Malaysian designs. The Bagobos not only borrowed ideas and designs, but also individual objects of clothing as if private property was not acknowledged. Everyday items such as jackets or bags were shared by several individuals in the tribe.

Cole’s treatise on borrowing echoed his contemporary Laura Watson Benedict’s observations as well. Benedict, an anthropologist who lived in Davao between 1906 and 1908, noted that certain Bagobo designs in beadwork, as well as in war shields “treasured by the Bagobos as their own” were borrowed from the Bilaans. The mother-of-pearl discs cut from the shell and used in the Bagobo jackets were very similar to Tagacaolo designs. The “spectre of comparison” can also be found when Benedict finds similarity in a Bagobo comb with those made in Japan. This latter comparison to Japan is not so surprising considering that mukkuri, the ancient Japanese jaw harp, bears a striking resemblance to the Bagobo ones called kubing. Furthermore, when Benedict asked Bagobos whether a certain betel nut box was made by Bagobos or Moros, her respondents could not distinguish the origin of the design and they gave her “all kinds of answers in regard to the source.”

This trait of exchanging, borrowing and sharing of objects and designs were not confined to the Bagobo alone. The Kulamans admitted that they learned the ceremonies connected with rice culture from the Tagacaolo and the Bilaan. The Tagacaolos who lived along the Padada and Bulatakay rivers on the west coast of Davao since the 1860s, were influenced by the coastal Muslims in the introduction and use of cotton textiles, which they started to wear instead of their traditional abaca garments. While the Mandayyas had the distinction among the Davao tribes of using
the most silver in the production of ornaments, their brass casting was influenced by Muslim workmanship. In the weaving and dyeing of abaca cloth, especially those used for women’s skirts, the Mandaya utilized a very similar process to that of the Bagobo.\(^5\)

Cole maintained that while the Bagobos borrowed from others, the cultural and material work created was new, and seen as distinctly Bagobo. In crafting a Muslim box procured from Borneo, Cole noted that the Bagobo caster “did not attempt to exactly reproduce the work... but simply borrowed a broad idea, and thus ... create[d] new forms.”\(^5\) Consequently, borrowing did not mean imitation. Foreign designs or techniques were incorporated into the tribe’s own practices, and made to fit into their own way of doing things. In another example, Cole mentioned the Bilaan type of clothing was “practically identical with that of the Bagobo,” however, the cloth became Bilaan in the way it was decorated – “beads are not used to any great extent [like the Bagobos do], but in their place are intricate embroidered designs.”\(^5\)

While the Davao tribes were adept borrowers of material culture, they were also skilled appropriators of cultural practices. The Manobos of northern Davao were known to adopt Spanish colonial symbols and titles of authority into their own traditions. A datu’s golden cane, a symbol of authority among the tribe, originated from the practice of Spanish colonial officials bestowing silver-embossed canes to local leaders. While the honorific name *masalicampo* conferred on Manobo elders, was a derivative of “*maestre de campo*,” a seventeenth century title of a Spanish military officer.\(^5\)

Mixing local with foreign elements among the Bagobos was likewise practiced. Building on their age-old mortuary practice of burying objects with the dead, the Bagobos still observed this rite in the early twentieth century with slight variations. Now, Catholic,\(^6\) the dead Bagobo in the coffin was surrounded by lighted candles, and prayed over by family and friends through a very Catholic novena. But just as the coffin was lowered into the grave, a bag containing rice, coffee, tobacco and betel nut was

\(^5\) Religious syncretism could still be observed among Bagobo communities in the late 1970s in *langis* (oil) worship. A mixture of coconut oil and herbs obtained in Mt. Apo was believed to be imbued with spiritual powers through chants derived from the Bible, and rites performed by a high priest. The incense-like oil is then used to bless tools used for agricultural work. (Heidi K. Gloria, *The Bagobos: Their Ethnohistory and Acculturation* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987), 104–105.)
placed within the coffin, and a “chorus of a Bagobo ceremonial recitation” bid the dead farewell into the afterlife.\textsuperscript{54}

2. **Mindanao in the Age of Encounter**

The proximity of Mindanao to the Spice Islands brought Europe within its expanding sphere of influence starting from the sixteenth century. Portugal and Spain, forged by faith and violence through their Catholic *Reconquista*, emerged as the first global seaborne powers.\textsuperscript{55} They dominated the world’s sixteenth-century oceans in search of spices, gold, silver, and converts to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{56} Charles V, following in the footsteps of his maternal grandparents, the most Catholic Monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand, supported naval expeditions of exploration and discovery that brought Spain to the Philippines.\textsuperscript{57} While converts would be an important goal for later expeditions, the earliest were mainly in search of a westward, Spanish route to the Moluccas, the source of the spices – pepper and cloves – that drew Arab and Chinese traders to Southeast Asia centuries before the Europeans came.\textsuperscript{58} Since Mindanao was located just north of the Moluccas, the early Spanish expeditions explored Mindanao and the neighboring Visayas first, several decades before local and international circumstances made Manila a favorable location for the capital of the emergent Spanish Philippines.

The first Spanish expedition, under Ferdinand Magellan, reached the Visayas and the coasts of northern Mindanao in March 1521, after sailing across the Pacific Ocean.\textsuperscript{59} After Magellan’s death in April, Magellan’s remaining crew, searching for a route to Borneo and the Moluccas, explored various points along the southern Mindanao coast, including Sarangani Island, located at the southwestern tip of the Davao Gulf.\textsuperscript{60} Sarangani, already frequented by Malay and Chinese merchants, was described in Spanish documents as the land “where gold and pearls are found.”\textsuperscript{61} The Spaniards not only found gold and pearls at Sarangani, but also a valuable local knowledge from coastal inhabitants whom the Spaniards abducted to act as guides to take them to the Moluccas, located south from Davao.\textsuperscript{62}

However, when Spain came to the Philippines in 1521, the Portuguese were already a decade in the Moluccas, having seized Malacca in 1511.\textsuperscript{63} As the first
Map 1.4. A colored copy of a Dutch map of the Philippines, Celebes and Moluccas, 1747. 

---

Map 1.4. A colored copy of a Dutch map of the Philippines, Celebes and Moluccas, 1747.
European kingdom to secure a route east, from Europe to Asia via Africa and Goa, the Portuguese, with their base in Malacca could have reached Mindanao in their various excursions to neighboring islands before the Spanish arrived.\(^{65}\) The Portuguese Magellan had been to Goa and the Indies, and took part in the siege of Malacca under its conqueror, Afonso de Albuquerque.\(^{66}\) Buttressed with his experiences in the East, Magellan was given command of a multi-national crew of 237 that included Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Frenchmen, Flemings, Germans, Levantines, “mixed-bloods,” and an Englishman to claim for Spain its first islands in the Orient.\(^{67}\) When the surviving crew of the Magellan expedition under the Basque, Elcano, arrived at Seville in 1522, after having successfully circumnavigated the globe, it was due to a combination of Portuguese knowledge of the eastern routes and Columbus’ understood westward direction that did the job.\(^{68}\) By then, the Portuguese had already built up their strength in Malacca, sending soldiers to the island of Ternate in the Moluccas, and constructing a fort at Sunda.\(^{69}\)

To secure a foothold for Spain in the Moluccas, Charles V sent a naval expedition in 1525 under Garcia Jofre de Loaisa, with Elcano as chief pilot.\(^{70}\) The *Santa Maria del Parral* was the first ship to reach the east coast of Mindanao in 1526 after a tempest separated the vessels of the expedition.\(^{71}\) Carried by the Pacific Ocean’s wind and current, the *Santa Maria del Parral* sailed along Cape San Agustin on the Davao east coast, before mutiny and shipwreck ended its fate in the vicinity of Sarangani Island.\(^{72}\) Loaisa’s flagship, the *Santa Maria de la Victoria*, later sailed around Mindanao then reached the Moluccas where the Spanish met opposition from the Portuguese.\(^{73}\) In the Moluccas, the Spaniards built a fort in Ternate with help from the local people there, and from there, they challenged the Portuguese presence in neighboring Tidore.\(^{74}\) The remaining Loaisa Expedition crew deliberately marooned themselves in the Moluccas when they burned the *Santa Maria de la Victoria*, in order to prevent the Portuguese from capturing it.\(^{75}\)

Having lost contact with the Loaisa Expedition, Charles V ordered the viceroy of Mexico, Hernando Cortez, to send another expedition to find out what happened to it, with the additional command to make the islands an outpost of Mexico. In record time, an expedition of three ships under the command of Alvaro de Saavedra sailed the Pacific from Mexico in 1527.\(^{76}\) Only one ship of the Saavedra Expedition reached
eastern Mindanao, but it was able to pick-up three survivors of the ill-fated Loaisa Expedition from “separate places in the Davao area.” From the narratives of the survivors, it was learned that the crew had mutinied, and killed the captain and several other crew members. Of the three survivors who told the tale, one was hanged for mutiny, while another fled to the interior of eastern Mindanao, rather than return to the censure of Europe. Saavedra died trying to find a return route via the Pacific and so did not improve Spain’s tenuous hold on the Orient.

Thus far, based on the three Spanish Pacific expeditions sent in the 1520s, Davao – even Mindanao – for that matter, was only used as a staging point for collecting water and provisions on the way south to the Spice Islands, after a long trans-Pacific journey. The great island of Mindanao was the first large land mass that Spanish explorers encountered across the Pacific. In finding a way back into the vast Pacific Ocean, their unfamiliarity with the wind and currents made establishing a return route very difficult, and the ships often found themselves forced back to Mindanao, including the Davao Pacific coast.

At this point in time, the Spanish did not build forts in Mindanao like what had occurred in Ternate. Furious fort-building in the Moluccas, and its ensuing demand upon local resources and manpower eventually turned the populace hostile, and forced the two Iberian powers to reach a rapprochement in times of local attacks. After 1529, a formal agreement was reached between the two kingdoms through the Treaty of Zaragosa whereby Charles V and Joao III agreed that the Moluccas lay within the perceived jurisdiction of the Portuguese half of the globe. Consequently, the Portuguese stepped up their exploratory activities in Mindanao using the Moluccas as their base. Between 1534 and 1536, Joao de Canha Pinto made several trips to Southwestern Mindanao including Sarangani Island. In Sarangani, the Portuguese came into conflict with the local inhabitants, and were nearly overpowered but for a storm that separated them. In 1538, the Portuguese baptized people in Sarangani, Surigao, and Butuan under an expedition led by Francisco de Castro.

For the Spaniards, the Treaty of Zaragosa meant that henceforth, expeditions to the Orient no longer had the Moluccas as the ultimate goal. Instead, Charles V and his lieutenants considered the Philippines, which they called Las Islas de Poniente,
strategically important under the Spanish sphere in coordination with their extensive and undiscovered land in the Americas.\textsuperscript{84} Thus, with exploration and conquest in mind, the next sea voyage to the Islas de Poniente in the western Pacific was undertaken in 1542 to complement a land-based exploration of Mexico on the eastern rim of the immense Ocean.\textsuperscript{85} Sailing from Mexico, with six ships\textsuperscript{86} under the command of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, the expedition objectives were to seek a trade route with China, to spread the Faith, to rescue the men and offspring of earlier expeditions, and to discover a return route to Mexico.\textsuperscript{86} Once on shore, Villalobos had the tasks of \textit{descubrimiento, conquista, and poblacion} (discovery, conquest, settlement).\textsuperscript{87} Of all the sixteenth century expeditions by Spain to the Orient, the Villalobos expedition stayed the longest in Mindanao.

\textbf{a. Villalobos, Davao and environs (1542-1545)}

Leaving Mexico on November 1, 1542, the expedition reached the “beautiful bay” of Baganga on the coast of eastern Davao on February 2, 1543 which Villalobos named Malaga, after his province in southern Spain.\textsuperscript{88} In Baganga, the crew busied themselves tending to those sick with scurvy, burying those who died, and building a launch to replace one that had been wrecked in transit.\textsuperscript{89} The Spaniards, though, found Baganga unsuitable for settlement, and intended to sail north towards Cebu, but instead, they were driven by the wind and currents to Sarangani in the south.

By the time the Villalobos expedition arrived in Sarangani, past experiences with Europeans had made the Sarangans wary, and so they refused to give the Spaniards any food. This act of refusal prompted Villalobos to attack the village by force. In response, the inhabitants, took their possessions and fled their coastal villages. They went to the Mindanao mainland, and thus left the island coast exposed to the Spaniards.\textsuperscript{90} When the Spaniards gained possession of the Sarangani coast, Villalobos dispatched a ship to the mainland to entreat the people to return to their houses with gifts, but the Sarangans did not heed the call.\textsuperscript{91}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{84} Villalobos certified before a notary at Puerto de Navidad, October 22, 1542 that he has received from Juan de Villalreal, agent of the Viceroy of Mexico Antonio de Mendoza, “four ships, one small galley, and one \textit{fusta}” The flagship was Santiago, and the others were San Jorge, San Antonio, San Juan de Letran, the galley San Christoval, and the \textit{fusta} San Martin. (B&R v.2, 60.)
\end{flushright}
In the deserted village, the Spaniards found “a little rice and sago,” a few hens and hogs and three deer victuals that were only good for a few days. As weeks turned into months, the Spaniards had to fend for themselves, and more importantly had to quickly learn which types of food were fit to be eaten. They found the fruits edible, as they ate figs, and the coco palm with its nutritious *buwa*, but the fruits were not sufficient. In their desperation, they ate “all the dogs, cats and rats [they] could find, besides horrid grubs and unknown plants” that caused death and disease.

Despite his men’s pleadings to up anchor and leave, Villalobos stayed in Sarangani - at the southern tip of Davao Gulf - for seven months, determined to use it as a base, and start a settlement. Sarangani, after all, had already been visited by the Magellan and Loaisa expeditions, and Villalobos may have deemed it a familiar territory, rather than the littoral of the mysterious large island of Mindanao. However, he sent several ships on exploratory trips around the Mindanao coasts to discover more of the island and to search for food. His men eventually circumnavigated the great island, which they measured to be “three hundred and fifty leagues.” In some parts of Mindanao, they had clashes with local peoples and lost men, and in others, their small vessel was shipwrecked. While on Samar, even if some men drowned in a river, they had friendlier relations with the Samarenos and left sick men with them until another expedition ship, the *San Juan*, collected them. At least two ships went to Resurrection Bay (Mayo Bay) in eastern Davao and found the inhabitants cooperative enough to deliver a note, dated April 1543, from one group of the expedition to the other who dropped anchor some months later. Because of its size, Villalobos named the great island of Mindanao *Caesaria Karoli* in honor of Emperor Charles V, the Spanish king, and the smaller islands to the north were called *Las Felipinas* after the young heir to the throne, Prince Philip.

Back in Sarangani, Villalobos attempted to establish a settlement according to his mandate of *descubrimiento, conquista, poblacion*. He ordered his men to plant maize, the first known attempt of a transpacific exchange of flora on Philippine soil. They tried growing it twice but failed on both attempts. His men complained that they did not come to plant crops, but rather to make conquests, and thus, this initial effort of

---

1 Worse, they ate land crabs which caused madness, and glowing lizards that caused many of the crew to die. (Emma Helen Blair and Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, CD-ROM Edition, 2000, vol. 2, 1903, 65.)
transpacific colonization came to naught because the glories of the recent conquests in the Americas lived in the imaginations and ambitions of these Spaniards. Towards the end of the Spanish presence in Sarangani, on August 7, 1543, the Portuguese started intriguing with the local population not to sell food to the Spaniards, and incited them to do the Spaniards “all the harm possible.”

Primarily defeated by hunger, and failing to find a Pacific route back to Mexico, Villalobos started sailing towards Portuguese territory in January 1544. He went south to Gilolo and Ternate to procure provisions. At the latter kingdom, the Spaniards collected left-over artillery from their old fort, since the island was now under Portuguese control. While busy in the Moluccas, Villalobos still sent a ship under Alvarado to explore Mindanao and the Visayas once more. Alvarado left on May 28, 1544, and returned to Tidore in October, with news of gold, cinnamon, ginger, wax and honey to be found in northern Mindanao, Butuan, and the Visayas. By the time of Alvarado’s arrival, the Spaniards were already making preparations for the return trip to Spain, but no longer via the Pacific route. Villalobos never found a return route to Mexico via the Pacific. He made two attempts to send a ship to Mexico, one on August 4, 1543 when he was still in Sarangani, and another on May 16, 1545 from Tidore. But both ships returned, having failed to cross the Pacific Ocean, forced back by storms. Villalobos was able to arrange a truce with the Portuguese, who were to take them to Lisbon via the Portuguese route across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope and Southern Africa. Villalobos died on the first leg of that journey though, at Ambon in April 1546, with St. Francis Xavier ministering to him.

b. Davao in the Maguindanao Trade, 1571-1678

Twenty years after the Villalobos Expedition, the Spaniards sent an expedition from Mexico under Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, guided by a survivor of the Loaisa Expedition, who later became Fray Andres de Urdaneta of the Augustinian Order. The expedition’s goals were to redeem the earlier expedition’s Spanish captives and their children, trade, establish a settlement if practicable, convert local peoples to the faith, and to search for a return route with explicit instructions of not straying into “lands belonging to the King of Portugal.” Perhaps because it was too close to the
Portuguese Moluccas, Legazpi bypassed Mindanao\(^1\) this time, and established settlements first in Cebu (1565), and then in Manila (1570), making the latter the seat of Spanish colonial administration beginning in 1571. In colonizing Manila, the Spaniards curtailed the trade of the Chinese who traditionally transacted with Mindanao and the Moluccas. This cut off Manila from Mindanao, which brought about closer trading ties between Mindanao and the Moluccas.\(^{105}\)

Because of its ties to the Moluccas, Mindanao came into contact with the Dutch during the early seventeenth century when they dislodged the Portuguese in the spice trade. Through religion, diplomacy, economic and political influence over strategic areas, blood ties and marriages, the seventeenth century saw the rise of Maguindanao as a trading entrepot.\(^{106}\) Situated on the western coast of Mindanao, Maguindanao leaders Sultans Kudrat and Barahaman, played on the Dutch and Spanish rivalries to their advantage, acting as a buffer and balance of power between the Dutch in the Moluccas to the south, and the Spaniards in Visayas and Luzon to the north.\(^{107}\) The Davao Gulf area, identified in Dutch accounts as Boetuan Bay, located in the southeastern corner of Mindanao, participated in this multi-coastal trade largely through its supply of wax.\(^{108}\) At the height of Mindanao’s wax trade, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Maguindanaos, the Dutch, and a group of English buccaneers including William Dampier, came to the Davao area.\(^{109}\) October was the busiest month when the winds were favorable, and one account noted 40 to 50 foreign prahu\(s\) waiting for the local headmen to deliver their goods on the bay.\(^{110}\)

Wax was used for candle-making in Manila, the dyeing of Batik in Java, and was also used as a sealer of shipboards and in the preservation of food. In the 1660s, Dutch traders exchanged cloth for wax, and other items. Wax was collected from the mountains of central Mindanao by tribal peoples under the control of the datu of Buayan, and via the rivers, brought down to the coast and the Davao Gulf area.

---

\(^{1}\) One of Legazpi’s ships, the San Lucas separated from the fleet, and sailed south to Mindanao in February 1565. It found anchorage in Davao Gulf for over a month as it waited for the rest of the expedition. It waited in vain, however and left early March. It sailed back to Mexico alone, to become the first European ship to make the return via the Pacific. However, Legazpi charged its captain, Alonso de Arellano with desertion, and the veracity of Arellano’s account of the voyage was met with doubts by his contemporaries as well as twentieth-century scholars Andrew Sharp and Henry Wagner. (Francis X. Hezel, S.J., *The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521-1885*, Pacific Islands Monograph Series 1 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1983), 28–29; Harry Kelsey, “Finding the Way Home: Spanish Exploration of the Round-Trip Route across the Pacific Ocean,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (April 1986): 162.)
Sarangani Island functioned as a great warehouse for much of the wax, before it was shipped to Maguindanao, which was the entrepot for redistribution in the Mindanao-Moluccas trade.111 Through diplomacy with the Dutch, the sultanate of Maguindanao maintained a near monopoly over the wax trade, since the Dutch were the biggest buyers of the commodity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.112 Based on Dutch documents, the price of wax in Boetuan Bay was always cheaper than in the Maguindanao capital of Simoay.113 By 1693, wax prices in Sarangani were set at 12 rixdollars, up from seven to eight rixdollars in the 1660s.114

Additional commodities traded in Davao were sulfur, cinnamon, and alluvial gold.115 Indigenous tribes living in the foothills of the mountains participated in this intra-regional trade. Manobos traded gold for cloth with the Maguindanaos who only went at agreed-upon times of the year to Manobo territory at the foot of Mt. Apo because they feared going there unannounced, since the tribes prevented outsiders from approaching their sacred mountain.116 From the Bagobos were procured sulfur, which also came from Mt. Apo, and extracted after performing a ritual that involved cutting to pieces a slave or another human as an offering to the spirit who lived inside the mountain.117

Two men, Datu Mangada and Datu Buissan, exercised influence over the littoral area from the Sarangani-Davao Gulf to the Caraga coast during the seventeenth century. Both had tenuous alliances with Maguindanao, which in turn affected the wax trade. In 1628, Datu Mangada, the king of Sarangani told a VOC representative that his people preferred to go hungry than pay tribute to Kudrat, and thus withdrew to the forests when Kudarat came to attack them.118 In the middle of the seventeenth century, Datu Buissan, the king of Kandahar,1 one of the Sangihe kingdoms between Mindanao and the Moluccas, had a younger brother residing in the Davao Gulf area who ruled in his stead.119 When the Dutch expressed interest to increase their trade in wax to Sultan Kudrat, the Sultan replied that he was annoyed with Datu Buissan who controlled the supply of wax, because the latter had taken people on the Caraga coast away from the Sultan, and even killed Kudrat’s subjects.120 After the death of Kudrat in

---

K VOC stands for Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or the United East India Company, the chartered trading company of the Netherlands.

1 However, the Dutch discovered that the king of Kandahar could not substantiate his claim on Balut, Sarangani or other territories on the island of Mindanao (Laarhoven 1989, 175.)
1671, his successor Sultan Barahaman, could not claim all parts of Davao’s Boetuan Bay because of the presence of Buissan’s rulers in the area, and by 1693, could no longer guarantee the safety of the Dutch in the Davao Gulf area.\textsuperscript{121}

The political relationship between Maguindanao and Davao-Boetuan is best described in the Southeast Asian concept of an \textit{orang bessar}’s spheres of influence, also called a mandala, where one’s power is not determined geographically, but by one’s followers, wherever they may be located.\textsuperscript{122} The Maguindanao Sultanate was considered a first among equals in terms of the various Mindanao polities. Thus, the inhabitants of the Davao Gulf area may have considered themselves subjects of more than one ruler, and subjected themselves only in certain instances, for example, when there was war and a show of force from the \textit{orang bessar} was needed.

The Davao-Maguindanao trade, modest when compared to that between Maguindanao and the Moluccas, reached its peak in the middle of the seventeenth century. The trade began to decline when the Dutch started imposing their monopolistic policies in 1668 after they gained control of Makassar. By this time, the Spanish\textsuperscript{M} had already abandoned Ternate, and the Dutch held sway in the Moluccas.\textsuperscript{123} The ensuing decades saw other entrepots in the area fall to the Dutch.\textsuperscript{124} Between 1677 and 1678, the King of Kandahar ceded his claims on Sarangani Island and areas around the Davao Gulf and the eastern coast of Mindanao to the Dutch governor Robert Padtbrugge in the hope that the Dutch would help strengthen his control in those areas against the incursions of the Sultan Barahman of Maguindanao.\textsuperscript{125} However, the Dutch never activated their claim by taking possession of any territory in the Davao Gulf area or Sarangani, so as not to antagonize the Spaniards after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) which ended the Spanish-Dutch wars. By the time the Buissan cession was made, Spain had already established settlements on the Pacific coast of northern Davao.\textsuperscript{126}

c. Spanish Incursions, 1609-1845

In 1609, the fort at Tandag became the forward base from which the Spaniards sought to colonize the Pacific coast of Mindanao through a combination of military

force and missionary zeal.\textsuperscript{127} The great island of Mindanao was divided between the Recollects who were assigned the areas east of Macajalar Bay (Misamis) down to Punta San Agustin (Davao), while the Jesuits were in the area to the west. Lumad tribes such as the Mandayas and Manobos were the focus of Recollect evangelization efforts, and the Tandag\textsuperscript{N} fort was built to defend the newly established Christian coastal settlements against the predatory Manobos in the mountains.\textsuperscript{128}

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the growth of these Pacific settlements was often set back due to local resistance in the 1620s and 1630s, slave raids from the 1680s to 1720s, and the overall lack of missionaries. The Maguindanao Muslim traders continued to ply their trade with the coastal populations for the first ten years of the Spanish presence. But things changed when the Caragans in the Pacific coast grew restive against Spanish rule in the 1620s, and the Muslims and the Dutch became involved in the Caragan resistance by 1630.\textsuperscript{129}

The punitive expeditions the Spaniards sent to crush the rebellious towns resulted in the emptying of the settlements, as virtually all the village chiefs and their sacups fled to the mountainous interior. Peace and the rebuilding of the settlements took a long time as the Caragans were slow to return.\textsuperscript{130} Social disturbance and rural unrest became the norm when the Maguindanaos shifted their activities from coastal trade to slave raiding between the 1680s and 1720s as they adjusted to the decline of the Southeast Asian spice trade and the rise of the Indo-Chinese textile and tea trade.\textsuperscript{131} Thus, in 1754, the Muslim raiders destroyed the fort at Tandag, capturing, killing and dispersing the inhabitants once more. Similar attacks on Bislig and Cateel in the 1760s also proved detrimental to the growth of these east coast settlements.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, when slave raiding became a lucrative business due to external trade, Davao Muslims claimed the east coast Mandayans as their subjects who were fair game for the slave raids.\textsuperscript{132}

Since Spanish colonization relied heavily on missionary activities, the colonization of Mindanao was directly affected by the troubles experienced by the religious orders. The expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768 left the already understaffed

\textsuperscript{N} Following the establishment of early settlements, the fort at Tandag was built in conjunction with that of Dapitan (1635), and Somayan (1645), for the Hispanization of Mindanao. (Gloria 2014, 55; Laarhoven 1989, 28,36.)
Map. 1.5. Selected Spanish settlements in eastern Mindanao, 18th to 19th century
Recollects as the sole religious order in Mindanao. European affairs of state also compounded the problem of religious personnel, when the Church’s influence in Europe declined with the overthrow of the ancien regime in the French Revolution and the subsequent impact of the Napoleonic wars. Caraga, already a distant hardship post, became administratively neglected. At one point there were only two priests for the entire east coast in the 1790s. Evangelization efforts, and thus, Hispanicization of the local populace, was a very slow process in southeastern Mindanao.

There was not much incentive for economic progress among the Mandaya converts in the settlements. The eastern coast of Mindanao became part of a seasonal coastal trading route that had vessels from the Visayas and Manila stop at Butuan, Surigao, Tandag, and Bislig, but the local-regional trade came to be dominated by Cebu-based Chinese merchants who replaced the Muslim traders by the eighteenth century. These Visayan merchants took full advantage of the Mandaya and Manobo converts in their business deals, offering very low prices for their wax, and high prices for imported goods. Moreover, depopulation was a constant problem in the coastal settlements because the Muslim slave raids regularly compelled inhabitants and priests to flee and live in the tropical forests of the interior for considerable periods of time. The total population of the Pacific Coast decreased due to the raids between 1749 and 1778.

In 1797, in an effort to free themselves from the grips of the Davao Muslims, the Mandaya datus of Caraga and Baganga negotiated with Spanish officials. They were prepared to go back to their old settlements “if a priest was assigned... and a garrison established ... to defend them against the Moros.” For the Mandayas and Manobos of eastern Mindanao, the attraction of Catholicism was the personal qualities of the missionaries, their material gifts of agongs and alms, and the protection Spain afforded them against Muslim slavery, notwithstanding abuses by Spanish and Visayan traders.

The Muslim datu of Davao, Campsa Israel, his brother and Iranun allies, at first

---

O Datu Campsa, also spelled Camsa, was an Iranun leader driven out of Jolo in the 1790s. (James Francis Warren, Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding, and the Birth of Ethnicity (Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 2002), 51., citing Vicente Barrantes, Guerras Piraticas de Filipinas contra Mindanaos y Joloanos. (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel H. Hernandez, 1878), 181.)
seemed open to peace talks with Spain in the early 1800s. They met with Fray Pedro de San Blas, the missionary of Cateel, and there was relative peace in Caraga during this time. However, the talks broke down in 1804, and the following year, it was heard that the Davao Iranuns had asked their traditional ally, the Sultan in Cotabato, to join them in a combined raid on Caraga, in order to punish the Mandayas for cooperating with the Spaniards. One of the Davao datus, Pampang, was especially vehement in claiming the Mandayas as his subjects, giving their leaders a scolding at Manay. The rumors of a raid by the Iranun and Maguindanao forced the Mandayas to flee to the interior once again.

However, these actions of the Muslim datus of Davao: the scolding threat and talks of a raid in alliance with Cotabato, were a show of force from a diminished position. The power and influence of their ally, the Maguindanao Sultanate, had started to wane, at the expense of its neighboring rival, the Sultanate of Sulu. The Taosug in Sulu had entered into a partnership in the British-Chinese trade in 1773, with the establishment of a British trading station at Balambangan. Meanwhile, the Spanish were ready for a new military strategy. In an 1823 lecture delivered in Manila, former Alcalde Mayor of Caraga, Felipe Arseo, encouraged an offensive in the Muslim territory around Davao Gulf, a change from the usual defensive position taken by Spain in Mindanao. On the diplomatic front, the Maguindanaos and Spaniards eventually came to some accommodation. In 1838, a number of Maguindanao datus, and at least one from the Davao area, signed a peace treaty with the Spaniards. A few years later, in 1843, Spain was able to force the Maguindanao Sultanate to cede Sibugay, and ultimately Davao in 1845, at a period when upland Mandaya baganis occasionally raided the coastal settlements. When Muslim raiders attacked the San Rufu, a Spanish trading vessel in Davao Gulf, the Maguindanao Sultan publicly disowned his former Iranun allies in Davao, rationalizing that the latter had always lived on the periphery of Muslim orthodox influence.

Alcalde Rendon, in his rebuttal of Datu Pampang’s claim of the Mandaya as his slaves, wrote of a “time when the whole area of Caraga Province was subject to Spain, as far as the Hijo River.” (Peter Schreurs, MSC, Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, University of San Carlos, 1989), 263.)

Date of the San Rufu Incident is unknown, but Fr. More wrote that it happened before Oyanguren conquered Davao in 1847. (Arcilla 1998, 106.)
The waning influence of the Maguindanao-Buayan sultanate in the Davao Gulf region coincided with stronger Spanish presence in Mindanao through the use of steamships, introduced by Governor General Narciso Claveria. Even the powerful Sulu Sultanate felt the lethal force of the new ships. Between 1846 and 1852, the Spanish mounted a sustained military effort in attacking Balangingi and Jolo. The Spanish steamships finally destroyed the stronghold of Balangingi despite resistance by its inhabitants in 1848. The destruction of Balangingi was a harbinger of things to come – as the Muslim prahu\textregistered\textit{s} proved to be no match for the faster and more powerful Spanish steamships in open water, so the steam vessels contributed to decreased slave raiding activities after the mid-nineteenth century.

\textbf{d. The last conquistador}

The cession of the Gulf of Davao to Spain prompted a former Surigao merchant, Jose Oyanguren, who was in 1845 a Judge of First Instance in Tondo, Manila to propose to Governor Narciso Claveria the conquest of Davao. In exchange, Oyanguren wanted exclusive trading rights over the newly conquered territory. The Spanish government agreed to a six-year arrangement, and Oyanguren prepared for the venture by raising funds among Manila businessmen, while the government provided the artillery. The territory claimed encompassed the east coast as far north as Punta Cauit, and the area north of the Sarangani Islands west of the Davao Gulf. The crucial target of conquest was Datu Bago's \textit{kota} at the mouth of the Davao River at Bankerohan, which controlled the trade and travel of the Davao Gulf area.

En route to Davao, Oyanguren recruited soldiers and settlers at Surigao, and stopped at Malipano Island in Davao Gulf, to get more provisions and men from among the Samal population. The Samals joined Oyanguren because he promised to rid them of the Muslims who had been oppressing them for decades. In addition, Oyanguren promised the Samals that he would levy no tribute upon them. From April to June, Oyanguren bombarded the riverine \textit{kota} at Bankerohan from the Santa Ana area, and finally dislodged Datu Bago on June 29, 1848, on the feast of St. Peter. To secure Davao, Oyanguren also conquered the Muslim settlements along the Bincungan and Hijo rivers north of the Gulf which regulated the communication between Davao and Surigao. He thus gained control of the entire Davao Gulf area, and
brought many of the Samals, under their newly chosen leader, Datu Masandin, to the Christian faith.155

Oyanguren established his cabecera at the site of Datu Bago’s former settlement in Bankerohan, and named it Nueva Vergara, after his hometown in Spain, and thereafter, the new territory under him was called Nueva Guipuzcoa, after his Basque home province.156 After the death of Oyanguren in 1858, the inhabitants changed the name of the town from Nueva Vergara to its former name of Davao, and in 1867, the whole province was renamed Davao.157

e. The isolation of Spanish Davao, 1848-1898

In Spain’s colonization endeavors whether in the Americas or in the Philippines, the missionaries were always at the forefront of the Hispanization process. This was also the case in Davao, one of Spain’s last efforts at conquest and colonization undertaken in the twilight years of its empire. The major task of Spain, primarily delegated to the missionaries, was to make the local inhabitants live in coastal settlements, called reducciones. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, many tribal peoples were living in indigenous rancherias located in the hinterlands. The Recollects tried their best to tend to the New Christians,8 but they were over-extended and precariously understaffed. Oyanguren personally went to Tandag, the main Recollect mission, to secure a priest for Davao, Fray Francisco Lopez, who became the sole missionary to the vast Nueva Guipozcua district.158 Under Fray Lopez’s tutelage were some 800 Christians in Nueva Vergara, and 24 New Christians, among them Manobos from Cape San Agustin who settled in Samal.159 Under such difficult conditions, the lone Recollect Father shepherded the small and scattered fold, occasionally adding a few converts.

When the Jesuits were restored among the Spanish dominions and returned to the Philippines in 1859, they were given back their old territories in Mindanao, but with the addition of Davao, the newly created Fourth District of Mindanao. In 1860, the restored order sent Fr. Cuevas to visit Davao, finding it a small, unsanitary town of 843 people scattered between the cabecera, Davao, and the visita of Sigaboy.160 On October 7, 1868, the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in Davao to formally take over the

8 Nuevos Cristianos was the term used by Spanish missionaries for newly converted indigenous peoples.
evangelization of the tribes from the Recollects. Their arrival was timely because the sole Recollect priest had died two months earlier, but due to the poor state of communication, no one knew about it in Manila.¹⁶¹

The Jesuits began their work in the reducciones established by the Recollects and then added new ones.¹⁶² From Davao, they began the process of conversion and resettlement in Samal Island in 1868. The Jesuits expanded their activities to mainland sites in Sigaboy (1870) on the west coast of the Gulf, and starting in 1873, in coordination with the Recollects, took over the administration of the old east coast settlements of Bislig, Cateel, Baganga, and Caraga.¹⁶³ In 1875, the settlement of Caburan on the Kulaman west coast was established at the behest of Christianized peoples already in the area.¹⁶⁴ These first reducciones became hubs from which more settlements were created.

The Jesuits employed two tactics in its Christianization of Davao. While they sought the conversion of the Davao Muslims based in more accessible rancherias at the river mouths near the coast, a lot of effort was also spent on the conversion of the more numerous lumads or tribal peoples living in the hinterlands. A Christian reduccion was typically located on the coast, and within the vicinity of an existing rancheria for ease of transfer and resettlement. Often, the missionary chose the site of the new reduccion. Then, through local datus, the Jesuit would convince the inhabitants of the inland rancheria to move to the new site. This was how the San Jose reduccion along the Caraga River was established:

At the site, the streets and house lots were traced according to the plan. The layout consisted of four main streets, intersected by six transversals, and the houses six by three and a half fathoms, were to have eight posts. Fire is prevented by having a distance of six fathoms between the houses. Reserved at the center of the reduccion is space for a large plaza and the public buildings such as the church, the courthouse, the convent, the schools for boys and girls, the houses of the inspector, capitan and the principal inhabitants. Future growth can be accommodated because the main streets could be lengthened indefinitely and the transversals can be increased in conformity with the number of future settlers.¹⁶⁵

The size of the reduccion and its layout included good agricultural lands where fields for planting cash crops such as coconuts and cacao, were allotted per family.¹⁶⁶ Planning was the easy part, but the actual act of settling the reduction often proved
very difficult. Like the Recollects before them, the Jesuits had difficulty in persuading tribes to relinquish their hillside rancherias and reside permanently in the reducciones. The absence of a permanent priest in the reducciones, and the imposition of tribute by the Spanish government often negated the possible benefits of a settled existence and conversion to the Catholic faith. New Christians often complained about the imposition of tribute because they were made to pay cash, and if they could not afford to pay cash, they then had to render manual labor, or polos y servicios, for 40 days a year. In other cases, typhoons, famine, and epidemics drove townsfolks struggling to survive, back to the hills.

Consequently, the permanence of new reducciones was always uncertain. Such settlements usually had promising beginnings because the New Christians, when urged by the governor or missionary on the spot, usually complied, constructing their houses on the site marked out. But indigenous cooperation often only lasted for a short time. The inhabitants would not maintain their houses, clean their surroundings, or cultivate their designated fields. Many went back to their old dwellings and semi-sedentary way of life in the forests. But some became middlemen in the emergent indigenous trading system where cloth, wire, and crystal beads from the coast settlements were exchanged for forest and upland products, such as wax, almaciga, canela, palay, bird’s nests, and cacao, cafe, abaca, and sugar. However, due to the small scale nature of their trade, they could not always provide enough food for their families, and usually returned to their upland relatives for assistance and food. Quite a number eventually reverted to their traditional non-Christian way of life in the interior. Such was the rate of depopulation that Fr. Quirico More likened these recently established reducciones to be like “salt melting away in water.”

Growth was slow, despite the best efforts of the Jesuit missionaries. The first census of the Davao district, taken in 1852 showed 10,287 inhabitants in 17 towns. The next census taken 33 years later, in 1885, showed only a slight increase of 125 inhabitants with 10,412 people in 18 towns. Between the two censuses, one town (Mampano) was established, while there were seven towns (Nueva Vergara and Pundaguitan, Tubod, Dapnan, Bislig, San Juan, Tago) that experienced slight increases. However, there were nine towns (Lianga, Caraga, Maurigao, Baganga, Quinablangan, Cateel, Hinatuan, Tandag and Linao) that showed marked decreases in population.
Tandag, the site of the old fort, experienced the most dramatic decline from 1,001 inhabitants in 1852 to only 130 in 1885.\(^5\)

The increase in the presence of registered Chinese from 2 to 20 for the whole district is interesting because it indicates the development of more commercial activities. In 1885, the Spanish presence was still limited to only certain points along the Davao Gulf coast, while an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Muslims and numerous undocumented indigenous peoples lived in the coasts and hinterlands.\(^{173}\) In other metrics, Davao lagged behind other places in Mindanao. In 1892, there were just 11 schools in Davao compared to 15 in Zamboanga, and 59 in Surigao.\(^{174}\)

The Spaniards knew that the way and means to progress was to improve agriculture, commerce and the resettlement of non-Christians, but the lack of personnel and the relative isolation of the place prevented any meaningful headway being made in Davao.\(^{175}\) They had hoped that the Caraga inhabitants would plant cacao and abaca aside from their traditional rice, camote, and root crops, but to no avail. Spanish officials belatedly even urged the migration of Cebuanos and Boholanos to settle in the extensive lands of Caraga “suited to the best kind of abaca.”\(^{176}\) However, these Spanish dreams would not be fulfilled until the arrival of the Americans at the start of the twentieth century.

3. America ascendant

War brought the Americans to the Philippines. It was a war that saw its beginnings in Cuba, some 15,500 kilometers away from Davao, and despite it being named the Spanish-American War, it was neither fought in the United States nor Spain, but rather in Cuba and the Philippines, two of the remaining Spanish colonies of the late nineteenth century.

\(^5\) The depopulation of Tandag may be attributed to the armed uprising of unconverted tribes between 1881 and 1883. Mountain-dwelling Manobos launched a spate of attacks against coastal towns, after years of suffering from Spanish-commanded armed expeditions comprised of converted kinsmen, especially recruited for their knowledge of the land. Thus, many town residents, for fear of being assaulted, fled the towns, and joined unconverted kins folks back in the mountains. (John M. Garvan, *The Manóbos of Mindándo*, vol. XXIII, Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences, First Memoir (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 245.) They appeared to have gone back and the town grew back in size, like all the other towns during the American period, when in 1910, the parish of Tandag listed 7,571 people. (Peter Schreurs, MSC, *Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao* (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, University of San Carlos, 1989), 323.)
Through newspapers, the American public followed the Cuban Revolution that began in 1895 with interest, sympathizing with the revolutionaries’ quest for liberty and freedom. American politicians and businessmen hoped for American intervention in order to gain control of a post-Spanish Cuba as it sought to protect and expand American investments in Cuban plantations, railroad, and mining.\(^{177}\) However, political events between the U.S. and Spain soon made war inevitable. First, the private correspondence of the Spanish Ambassador to Washington, Dupoy de Lome, was intercepted by Cuban Revolutionaries and released to the American press on February 9, 1898. In a letter written to a friend in Havana, de Lome described U.S. President McKinley as a weak and a crowd-pleasing politician.\(^{178}\) A few days afterwards, on the night of February 15, the battleship U.S.S. Maine mysteriously exploded in Havana harbor, killing 268 men on board. After months of heated debate, the U.S. officially declared war against Spain on April 25, 1898, with Congress, voting 311 to 6 in the House and 42 to 35 in the Senate.\(^{179}\)

The Spanish-American war arrived in the Philippines on May 1, 1898, when the U.S. Asiatic Fleet under Commodore George Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet off Cavite, upon instructions from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt. As a consequence, the U.S. became embroiled in the on-going Philippine Revolution against Spain in alliance with the Filipinos. When the Philippines declared its Independence from Spain on June 12, 1898 at Kawit, the American squadron was just a few kilometers away in Sangley Point, while one American was invited to sign the Independence document. The Filipinos were gracious enough to include in the last lines of the Declaration their gratitude for America’s “disinterested protection.”\(^{180}\)

However, the United States did not remain disinterested for long. By December, the Treaty of Paris had declared that the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Marianas were ceded by Spain to the United States. On February 4, 1899, the Philippine-American alliance had turned into a war, and two days later on February 6, the U.S. Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris, taking official possession of the Philippines. By acquiring the overseas territories of a former European empire, the Treaty of Paris established America as a new imperial power in the eyes of the rest of the world. But for the United States, the acquisition of new territories was not an altogether new experience.\(^{181}\) The nation itself was built on westward expansionism,
and Americans, from politicians to the general public, were proud of this pioneering colonial heritage.¹⁸² Many late-nineteenth-century Americans were prepared to look back on the deeds of their fathers and grandfathers on the western frontier with pride of overcoming obstacles, from First Nation peoples to nature itself, to build by the late nineteenth century, one of the larger economies in the world.¹⁸³

Economic success was closely related to the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, democracy, and progress upon which the United States republic was founded. Five years before the Spanish-American War, historian Frederick Jackson Turner famously asserted a thought that had been ‘floating around rather loosely.’¹⁸⁴ He stated that America’s westward advance since the eighteenth century, opening up frontiers and settling in the lands from the Appalachians to the Pacific, had given settlers a “distinctly American democratic outlook.”¹⁸⁵ He likewise imbued frontier settlement with the values that made the United States the progressive nation it was by 1893 – “a society which encouraged democracy, individual liberties, virtues of the common man, self-reliance, a kind of spiritual vitality, and optimism about the future.”¹⁸⁶

By the turn of the century, Turner’s thesis had become “historical orthodoxy” in the academy as well as receiving popular acclaim, and defined the beliefs of a generation.¹⁸⁷ The frontier thesis spoke to the “average citizen because it elevated the achievement of ordinary settlers,” as well as providing a historical context and belief for a people increasingly aware of their emerging role on the global stage yet self-conscious of the “brevity of their national identity.”¹⁸⁸ Turner was not the first to write a history of America’s westward movement; others had written popular romanticized histories of the West (including Theodore Roosevelt).¹ But his frontier thesis, which combined migration and the environment’s geographical and social forces as agents in history, provided academic sophistication to a popular idea.¹⁸⁹

However, for Americans living in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the frontier that forged their national character was already deemed closed, as Turner aptly reminded the nation. Consequently, a number of influential Americans were concerned that the comforts of the Gilded Age had turned American men soft, and

they feared that the material gains of the earlier generations could not be sustained. War and the business of empire were seen as ways in which to invigorate the American character and economy once more. When war presented itself over Cuba, the transition from republic to empire was both rapid and pragmatic.

a. The American frontier expands to the Philippines

In the Philippines, the Americans sought to re-create their own American West abroad, not just for the benefit of the Filipinos, but also to save themselves from the excesses of the Gilded Age. Mark Twain had coined the term “Gilded Age,” while Theodore Roosevelt (1899) proclaimed the benefits of a muscular Christianity and a “strenuous life.” Informed by the history of their frontier experience, the United States came to the Philippines with a belief in a God-given right to bring civilization through democracy and industry. The gospel of progress and economic development was as much an American imperative as democracy and civilization. Both forces worked in tandem when America tamed its continental West, and American imperialists were keen to introduce civilization and democracy in the Philippines as well.

In the newly acquired colony, no place was more conducive to the re-creation of the American West of frontier days than Mindanao, but especially Davao – where a vast land was still “wild” and its inhabitants few. For an America that believed its successive western frontiers had provided the “free land,” through which equality and democracy could flourish, as an integral aspect of progress, Davao seemed to fill this requirement. With a land area of 9,707 square miles, and an estimated population of Filipinos and New Christians of 18,000 in 1900, Davao fit the frontier bill. In the 1903 Census, Davao with its 65,496 inhabitants ranked the second least populated province among the 49 on the list. It had a population density of 7 persons per square mile compared to the densest provinces of Ilocos Sur with 398 and Cebu 337.

When the first Americans arrived in Davao, without the benefit of surveying equipment, the land must have looked vacant and inviting. Upon entering the Gulf, they were met by the impressive sight of Mount Apo, blue and hazy in the distance. As their launch drew closer to the coast, the dense highlands revealed themselves, while its passengers gradually realized the vastness of the land they were about to
encounter. When these first Americans came closer to shore, they saw the small town with its few wooden buildings juxtaposed against the backdrop of the majestic mountain. Stepping ashore, thoughts of their recently-closed frontier that Turner, the most prominent historian of their generation, or Buffalo Bill Cody, the most prominent entertainer presented, flashed through their minds.¹⁹⁶

\[\textbf{b. The first Americans in Davao}\]

For Davao, 1899 was a turning point. When the heady fervor of Revolution and Independence permeated Luzon and the Visayas in 1898, things were still quiet in Davao. Even when tensions rose in September 1898 during the failed uprising in Baganga, prompting the inhabitants of neighboring Pacific coast towns to flee to the mountains of Manay and Caraga; the capital, Davao, was still for all of 1898.¹⁹⁷

Change, however, finally came the following year. On January 15, 1899, Davao’s Spanish officials, who helped to peacefully end the Baganga standoff just a month earlier, calmly turned over the administration of the town to an elected junta composed of Spanish and Filipino inhabitants.¹⁹⁸ Discord broke out soon enough though, just two weeks after the handover of power. Leading residents fought with each other, factions were created, and the junta was overthrown; a second was created, then a third put in place, in a span of a month amidst murder and mayhem. Around twenty inhabitants – Muslims, Visayans, and Bagobos were killed. One witness described the “firing from one and the other side, shouts, running, death threats... - such that it seemed the end of the world.”¹⁹⁹

Having enough of the violence, Davao Muslim leaders asked Fr. Saturnino Urios, the Jesuit Superior to restore order. Through repeated interventions, the Jesuits were able to talk to the leaders of the different factions, and restore peace— but just in time for their departure. Recalled by their superiors to Manila, the Spanish Jesuits left Davao on February 4, 1899. The black robes who boarded the steamboat \textit{Labuan} at sundown faced a crowd of well-wishers and converts not wanting them to go, and left “that beautiful gulf enveloped in darkness.”²⁰⁰ That night,¹ little did the town know

¹ On the night of February 4, 1899, the Philippine-American War began when an American soldier fired at a Filipino patrol on San Juan Bridge.
that an incident happening on Manila’s San Juan Bridge portended an era of rapid change for Davao.

Ten months after the Jesuits left, the U.S. Army, led by General J.C. Bates came to Davao on an exploratory mission during the early stages of the Philippine-American War. On December 14, 1899, intent on giving the Americans a cordial welcome, Davao town officials raised the American flag as a sign of greeting before the reconnaissance team disembarked from their ship Manila to inspect the town. The occupation army arrived the following week, composed of Companies I and L of the 31st Infantry, U.S. Volunteers, under the command of Major Hunter B. Liggett, to take up their post in Davao and Mati. Both towns gave the soldiers a warm welcome. Liggett reached Baganga on December 22, the site of the aborted uprising, but since he found the town satisfactory, he did not station any troops there. After the initial gesture of flag raising in Davao, the other towns followed suit by waving hastily-procured American flags in welcome. By 1903, Davao, Mati, Baganga, Caraga, and Cateel formally came under U.S. Army rule as municipal districts of the Moro Province.

---

2 Macario D Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory* (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 2.
7 Macario D Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory* (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 2.
8 Tiu, 6.
9 Tiu, 93.
10 Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory*, 93.

The Davao contingent was smaller in size than those sent to Cotabato and Misamis since Davao was relatively peaceful compared to the Muslim Cotabato and revolutionary Misamis. (W. A. Kobbe, “Extracts from Annual Report of Brig. Gen. W.A. Kobbe, Commanding Department of Mindanao and Jolo” (U.S. Army, September 10, 1900), 4, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.)
15 Schreurs, MSC, Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispianization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao, 283.
17 Macario D Tiu, Davao : Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 47.
18 Joaquin Rajal, Exploracion Del Territorio de Davao (Filipinas) (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Fontanet, 1891), 19.
21 Ernesto Corcino, Davao History (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 7.
22 Rajal, Exploracion Del Territorio de Davao (Filipinas), 15.
27 Ernesto Corcino, Davao History (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 7–24; Macario D Tiu, Davao : Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 47, 91–92.
29 Cole, 73.
32 Cole, 201.
36 Schreurs, MSC, Mission to Mindanao 1849-1900 From the Spanish of Pablo Pastells, S.J., 1:91.


42 Cole, 123–124.

43 Cole, 99.

44 Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, April 23, 1907,” April 23, 1907, 4, Cummings Expedition, Field Museum Archives.

45 Benedict, 4.

46 Benedict, 5.

47 Benedict, 2.


49 Cole, 158.

50 Cole, 190.

51 Cole, 124.

52 Cole, 133.


54 Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, April 23, 1907,” April 23, 1907, 7–8, Cummings Expedition, Field Museum Archives.


65 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 25.


67 Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 41.


71 Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 90.
72 Macario D Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory* (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 7.
73 Peter Schreurs, MSC, *Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao* (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, University of San Carlos, 1989), 35.
75 Nowell, 332.
76 Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 93.
77 Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory*, 7.
78 Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 90.
80 Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 94.
81 Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory*, 8–9.
83 Blair and Robertson, *B&R*, 1903, 2:68.
86 Blair and Robertson, 2:64–65.
88 Blair and Robertson, *B&R*, 1903, 2:68.
89 Blair and Robertson, 2:68.
92 Blair and Robertson, 2:71.
97 Blair and Robertson, 2:78.
143 Schreurs, MSC, *Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanicization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao*, 263.


146 Macario D Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory* (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 21; Aram A. Yengoyan, “Environment, Shifting Cultivation, and Social Organization among the Mandaya of Eastern Mindanao, Philippines” (University of Chicago, 1964), 49.

147 Schreurs, MSC, *Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanicization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao*, 281.


154 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 71.


157 Corcino, *Davao History*, 41.

158 Corcino, 72.

159 Corcino, 76.


165 Schreurs, MSC, *Caraga Antigua 1521-1910 The Hispanicization and Christianization of Agusan, Surigao and East Davao*, 373.

166 Tiu, *Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory*, 24.


170 Pastels, Tomo 1:14.


172 Corcino, *Davao History*, 84.
From an 1885 estimate by Fr. Quirico More in Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 85.


Schreurs, MSC, 285.


Healey, 37.


White, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill,” 7–11.


Arcilla, S.J., 3:596.

Corcino, *Davao History*, 112–113.
202 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 114.
Map. 2.1. Southeastern Mindanao
CHAPTER 2
CARVING EDEN: DAVAO, PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Davao, why don’t you make any progress?

Eerily precise, legendary Spanish missionary Saturnino Urios, S.J., evangelizer of
the Mindanao east coast, wrote the following paean in the late nineteenth century, as
if he could see into the future:

O Davao, which in the near future is going to be the best province of Mindanao!
Oh beautiful plain of Davao and gulf of Davao and Sarangani! How rich is your
land, how crystalline your waters, how many people are living here! Why don’t
you make any progress? If time sleeps, God will speak, and then we will sing
Victory!¹

These lines were both a prophetic vision for Davao and a pioneering challenge to
its inhabitants. When the Americans started arriving on this southeastern Philippine
frontier, their first impressions and corresponding vision for Mindanao, the “least
known” of the Philippine islands, paralleled the perceptive Jesuit’s.²

First generation anthropologist Laura Watson Benedict waxed lyrical about the
“range upon range of green-clad, blue-topped mountains” and the “shimmering,
sparkling, dancing waters of the Gulf of Davao.”³ Housewife Evelyn Burchfield wrote
of a tropical paradise, “lovely” with flowers, coconut palms and beautiful sunsets,⁴
while pioneer planters spoke about a land of primordial plenty, where the soil was
“ten feet deep rich volcanic ash” that could grow almost anything.⁵ They subsequently
remembered water freely flowing in “streams [as] frequent as deer paths.”⁶ While the
Governor General reported on the rains that came regularly,⁷ precipitated by “the
large, cool and moist forest areas clothing the high mountain peaks and slopes.”⁸ Aside
from being a spot of natural abundance, where “nature provided almost everything”
for the manufacture of furniture and utensils,⁹ Davao was likened to places one finds
in fairy tales like “the land of Jack’s bean stalk” because its vegetation grew so fast.¹⁰
It was for many American newcomers, the “garden of the gods.”¹¹

Consequently, these praises were invariably followed by an incantation of its
possibilities. Davao was “the field of promise,”¹² “expected to develop into one of the

69
richest agricultural sections” of the Philippines. Applying the technique of modern agricultural science, colonial administrators preached that the way to realize its potential was through planting superior crop varieties, and the “scientific management of the plantations,” including the use of machines. Davao, where they saw “no habitations,” was a place to introduce the “great experiments” of the American colonial project to bring progress and development to their colony.

Fig. 2.1. The mouth of the Caraga River, 1905. Courtesy of the Newberry Library.

These optimistic, can-do pronouncements echoed the belief popularly espoused by the historian of the day, Frederick Jackson Turner, that it was the settling of their western continental frontier that enabled America’s development. Turner explained that the recurrent experiences of their nation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of “winning the wilderness” – where primordial conditions were transformed and developed through the civilizing process of industry and democracy – had created an optimistic and successful America by the 1890s. With the dawn of a new century, the western frontier of the United States was expanded into the Philippines, and nowhere was this frontier mindset more evident than in Davao, where there was vast unscathed wilderness under the public domain. American settlers on the Davao frontier expected to encounter this “meeting point between savagery and civilization,” and from where rapid growth and development could be created.
Naturally, “progress and development” was the catch phrase which the United States government utilized to approach the administration of the Lumad or tribal people, the “savages,” found on the Davao frontier. The colonial government used practices and policies shaped by their contact with American Indians on the western frontier in dealing with the indigenous tribes of Davao. In April 1900, President McKinley instructed the colonial government to “adopt the same course followed by [the U.S.]Congress in permitting the tribes of our North American Indians to maintain their tribal organization and government…” As well as adopt measures “to conform to their customs, habits and even prejudices.”

The military government of the Moro Province followed these instructions creating the tribal ward system to “to provide for the government and control” of the local peoples. A traditional leader, already recognized by the people, was usually appointed as headman of a tribal ward, and only in rare cases were Americans appointed as local headmen by the district governors. Incorporating the indigenous tradition of the bagani and the frontier sheriff within the American colonial bureaucracy, the headman was authorized to wear a baldric of red leather with a metal disc bearing the seal of the Moro Province. However, the headman could no longer dispense justice to the extent that the traditional datus did before – holding the power of life and death – because that decision was transferred to the district governor.

Certainly, there was an imaginative vision to make Mindanao a westward extension of the American frontier. Two administrative policies reflect this frontier legacy in American colonial Mindanao. The first is the idea of the Mindanao territory, similar to the way Hawaii was governed. Interim Governor General Col. Ralph Hoyt introduced the idea in 1909, when he urged, based on the great difference between Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines, that the former should be officially separated from the latter, and declared “a territory of the United States, and not a colony...open to occupation and development,” where naval bases, plantations and forest reserves could be designated.

---

A The tribal ward system was in effect for a decade, from February 19, 1904 until September 1, 1914 when it was replaced by municipal districts under the reorganized provinces of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. (Peter Gordon Gowing, Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920 (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1983), 260–62.)
While Hoyt’s 1909 recommendation was not acted upon, the idea of separating the large southern island did not go away. In 1926, the idea was resurrected by Representative Robert Bacon of New York, when he sponsored a bill that pushed for the separation of Mindanao and the widespread creation of a plantation economy for the island. Davao and to a certain extent, Basilan, were obviously the models, with large-scale plantations that could produce not just hemp, and coconuts, but also rubber, which was experiencing a world shortage at that time. Internal American politics, and pressure from Filipino nationalists, eventually defeated the Bacon Bill, despite support from Muslim leaders in Mindanao. Only the onset of the Great Depression and the negotiated Philippine Independence through the Hare Hawes Cutting (1933) and Tydings McDuffie (1934) bills brought an end to the American dream of a further western frontier in Mindanao.

The second legacy of America’s frontier experience for Mindanao was in the introduction of the idea of reservations. Col. Hoyt recommended reservations as a pragmatic way to handle the administration of indigenous peoples if Mindanao were declared a U.S. territory. Citing the cultural gulf between the “moros” and “wild tribes” of Mindanao when compared to the Christian peoples of the northern islands, it was thought necessary that the Lumad peoples be relocated to “reservations, secured in their rights, under military and police protection.” However, his predecessor, Gen. Pershing, continued to maintain the tribal ward system (which still bore hallmarks of the American West experience) as the proper way to govern the indigenous tribes.

Then in the early 1930s, when Davao became a principal destination for migrants, and both indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants were subjected to the abuses of carpetbaggers, American administrators urged colonial Secretary of the Interior Honorio Ventura to adopt a reservation system. In the Ventura Reservation Plan, parts of Agusan and Davao were to be set aside for the settlement of Christian and non-Christian Filipinos in need of protection from land speculators who tended to make claims on land cleared by early settlers. On the reservation, the government

was to “keep a closer check on settlers” through “constant and sympathetic supervision.” These settlers were to be given an education, namely through the establishment of schools and training centers, and the experience of self-government, in order to be empowered to protect themselves from “designing men.”\(^{29}\) As a partial explanation for the injustices, Governor General Davis pointed out that “this phase of settlements is familiar to pioneers of the western part of the United States and is carried on the same way in Mindanao.”\(^{30}\)

While clear heirs of the American western frontier experience, these proposed policies failed to make headway in the Moro Province government on Mindanao mainly due to Manila-centric policies after 1913, as nationalist politicians became more influential in colonial governance. In Davao, where there was a lack of government initiative to the point of neglect, the development of the frontier was left largely to private enterprise. Turner’s general idea of ‘progress and development’ rested more in the minds of pioneer planters, and by extension in the plantations they developed and controlled. Because the plantations embodied a palpable symbol of American-style ‘progress and development,’ these early agro-industrial ventures played a crucial central role in creating the infrastructure that led to the rapid settlement of the Davao frontier, and its subsequent transformation during the first half of the twentieth century.

2. **Build the roads, and the others will follow**

In November 1901, Wharton School Professor James T. Young, felt the burden of expectations\(^{c}\) due to the acquisition of a newly-won colony and a century-old heritage of American-style progress. He wrote the Bureau of Insular Affairs to express his fear that “we in this country are expecting too rapid progress in the Philippines, while the Filipinos on their part are expecting too much from us.”\(^{31}\) As a fundamental step in achieving the lofty goal American imperialists had set for themselves, he praised the government effort of road-building in the colony.\(^{32}\) Young noted that all other aspects of progressive development – education, tax revenues, peace and order, and self-government – follow from this important first step in opening up a new frontier.

\(^{c}\) It is thus notable that Turner quoted Representative John Calhoun’s utterances in 1817 about America’s rapid progress: “We are great and rapidly – I was about to say fearfully – growing!” as the distinguishing feature of American life, while Young, by 1901, ironically, felt its burden.
In Davao, road-building was one of the first activities that the U.S. Army did upon arrival. Captain Burchfield of the 31st U.S. Volunteers, the first group of soldiers stationed in Davao in 1899, recalled that their work “was not with rifles, but with picks and shovels... we had to build roads, there were none.” When the American soldiers came ashore from launches and into the town center, Davao had “not one foot of roadway over which a wagon could be taken outside of the town streets.” There were only a total of eight palm-tree lined town streets, four on each side, intersecting with each other to form a grid, about a kilometer from the center of the town, and not a single road outside the one-kilometer radius.

The soldiers did the first diggings in 1899 with road-making equipment shipped all the way from the United States. However, after establishing contact with local peoples, the soldiers assumed supervisory roles over an indigenous labor force in the construction of roads. All the different tribes of Davao, as well as Visayan settlers, worked together to construct the roads. Soon, the Davao jungles and beaches were being transformed by picks and shovels to build roads and trails along the coast, which connected the Spanish-era settlements of Malalag, Santa Cruz, Digos, Sigaboy, and Mati to Davao. Trails were constructed first, with the intention of converting them into roads in the future, when trade and traffic grew. In the town of Davao, between 1901 and 1903, the military had built three wagon trails coming from the direction of the Matina target range in the east, Santa Ana pier in the west, and the Agdao residences in the northwest that converged with the existing dirt roads in the town center. Areas where wagon roads were built were divided into road districts, and a local resident was deputized as a road supervisor tasked with the upkeep of the road in each district.

The U.S. military relied on a combination of steam launches and wagon trails for effective patrolling and communication in Davao Province because of a deeply indented coastline measuring some 640 kilometers, including the San Agustin peninsula that separated the Pacific Coast from the Gulf Coast. To connect the old towns of the Pacific Coast with the new capital town of Davao situated on the Gulf, the

---

The Department of Commerce and Police in Manila under Secretary William Cameron Forbes followed this system in 1909, after failed attempts at road maintenance in the regular provinces. (William Cameron Forbes, “Letter of the Secretary of Commerce and Police to All Provincial, Municipal, and Other Officials Relative to the Present Road Policy in the Philippine Islands,” June 16, 1908, 6.)
military had to construct trails over coral and sand beaches, and through dense jungle. An Army report dated July 7, 1902 highlights the difficulties of travelling to the Pacific coast towns of Mati, Caraga, Baganga and Cateel from Davao, which took 15 days to reconnoiter:

Much of the way is over stony beach and rocky cliffs, and quite a number of the men are suffering from sore feet and swollen ankles due to their recent march.... The trail heretofore used was mostly the beach, and during high tide, it could not be travelled. The beach, too, for long stretches is ....with rock, making it difficult to ride or walk. 41

The road workers had to cut their way through large forests, clear the stumps and snags to create wagon roads. Where numerous streams ran, they put small culverts through them to create an uninterrupted roadway. 42 By 1902, an inter-provincial road to connect Davao west to Cotabato via Makar was under construction in order to run parallel to the telegraph line between the two provincial capitals, as well as a road from Davao to Tagum with the goal of reaching Butuan, and Surigao in the far north. 43 The Davao-Butuan road would link together the Spanish-era Pacific coast towns of Caraga, Baganga, and Cateel. 44

The expansion of the town’s area through the forceful road-building activity of the U.S. Army made a lasting impression upon the leading inhabitants of Davao. When they learned that Captain Hunter Liggett was to be transferred, the Municipal Council petitioned military headquarters in January 1901 to retain him in Davao, listing the “opening of the roads” as one of the principal reasons why they wanted the Captain to remain. The members of the municipal council, comprised of tribal leaders, Christian settlers, and Muslim datus, placed road construction, the formation of the municipal council, and the impartial organization of the different tribes as major accomplishments of a benevolent America that the Captain embodied. 45

However, as the task grew larger, with the need to develop more roads within towns, U.S. Army road-building efforts were stymied by lack of suitable workers. By 1903, laborers for road building became scarce, due to the competing demand for workers to develop the plantations being opened up. 46 Because of the “impossibility” of obtaining labor at “any reasonable price” by the end of 1903, the Army discontinued its activity on building trails in Davao. 47 Henceforth, the plantations would become the
chief road builders in Davao, constructing more kilometers of roads than the
government, either military or civilian.

The new colonizers differed from the Spaniards on the importance they placed
on road-building. Benefiting from the technological improvements of the Industrial
Revolution, the United States developed its colonial territory on land, while Spain, also
due to lack of resources and befitting its history as a maritime empire, travelled to
their Davao settlements by sea. The American colonial government in the Philippines
was influenced by the Good Roads Movement occurring at the same time in the
United States. During the first decade of American rule, the Manila Automobile Club,
whose work was lobbying legislation for automobile use, had as its honorary president,
Governor General William Cameron Forbes, and Filipino legislative leaders, such as
Sergio Osmeña, as honorary vice-presidents.48 Bureau of Insular Affairs chief, Gen.
Frank McIntyre measured “good roads” as one of the indicators of progress and
development in the Philippines in a 1915 interview.49 For the Moro Province
government in Davao, road building efforts proved a combination of military logistical
necessity in the early years of occupation, and a private enterprise initiative and
requirement in subsequent years.

Nonetheless, early Army road-building had a profound effect on Davao because
the initial infrastructure built influenced the inhabitants’ choices on their way of life
and their modes of transportation. The development of the automobile industry in the
U.S. and Europe, especially the mass-production of inexpensive motor vehicles, found
willing users on the Davao frontier in the process of roads being opened and markets
developed. Nothing symbolized the opening of the frontier and progress more than a
road on which to run motor vehicles. While horses and oxen were traditionally used to
a large extent, some Davao inhabitants soon preferred the automobile as a singular
mode of transportation. It was thus not surprising that a 1936 article on Davao
observed that it had a first class bus transportation line, and that there were no horse-
drawn calesas in Davao (unlike Manila), but rather a taxi service popularly called “P.U.”

48 For example, in 1931, there were 314 kilometers of private roads as compared with 152 kilometers of
public roads in the Province of Davao. Governor Davis blamed this governmental shortcoming on
provincial partisanship. (Dwight Davis, “Annual Report of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands,
(short for Public Utility) by the locals. For better or worse, early twentieth-century Davao was built with the automobile and truck in mind.

3. Abaca, global demand, and plantation agriculture

It can be said that abaca made Davao possible. This cordage fiber was responsible for the rapid settlement of the Davao frontier at the turn of the century, and the transformation of a small town into a city by the mid-1930s. People from around the Philippines and the world settled in Davao to participate in its booming plantation economy producing primarily abaca for the world market, but also other high-value export commodities such as coconuts and timber.

Exporting commodities for global consumption was not unique to Davao, much less to the Philippines. Different countries in different eras produced export crops for the modern world system. Sugar was produced in the Canaries, the Caribbean, South America, Hawaii, and Java; rubber was grown in Brazil, British Malaya and Sumatra, while coffee plantations existed in Africa, South America and French Indochina. But abaca was only grown in the Philippines. Furthermore, when compared to other countries’ export crops which were usually grown on large estates, abaca in Bicol, the premier abaca-growing region of the Philippines in the nineteenth century, was cultivated on farms averaging less than two hectares.

Thus, when abaca came to be grown on large-scale plantations in Davao, it was not only a significant development for the Philippine abaca industry, but also had international repercussions. The increased production of plantation-grown abaca enabled the fiber to achieve new targets in the international cordage market, heretofore unmet. Specializing in an important crop no other country in the world grew, Davao became the topic of discussion in Tokyo and Washington by the 1930s, with no less than President Franklin Roosevelt inquiring on Davao conditions in 1936 on the question of the large Japanese population involved in its production. By 1940, Davao supplied 53.3 percent of total abaca production in the Philippines, a far cry from its 3.4 percent share just 25 years earlier. By doing so, abaca production brought once-peripheral Davao, or the frontier, into the epicenter of government – the White House – in a matter of just a quarter of a century.
a. The plant

Abaca, a hard fiber, is indigenous to the Philippines, and its many varieties grew in the different islands of the archipelago, often six to eight in one locality, before the Europeans arrived.\(^{55}\) The plant grew to a height of five to ten meters, and had long oblong leaves supported by cylindrical stalks rising from the ground. To the untrained eye, it may be mistaken for a banana tree, but the abaca stem is more slender and darker in color.\(^ {56}\) It is a plant sensitive to soil, topography and weather requirements. It grows best in alluvial or volcanic soil along moderate elevations, especially on slopes with good drainage. Abaca prefers an area with humid temperature, and abundant and evenly distributed rainfall.\(^{57}\)

![Fig. 2.2. Musa textilis Née. Courtesy of Khartasia Database.](image)

The earliest record about abaca was made by the Englishman, William Dampier, who lived on Mindanao in 1686, when he mentioned a “plantain” that was used for clothes by the local people.\(^ {59}\) The people extracted the fiber by stripping-off the outer rind of the trunk, drying it in the sun for two to three days, and when dried, the women rend the threads from the trunk to obtain the fiber that they wove into textile.\(^ {60}\) In 1801, the plant got its scientific name after the 1789-1792 Malaspina
Expedition brought samples to Spain, from which botanist Luis Née named the abaca plant *Musa textilis*. It was classified under the banana family where the common banana (*Musa sapientum*) and the plantain, (*Musa paradisiaca*) belonged. In 1860, an early reconnaissance mission of the Spanish Jesuits to Davao mentioned that the fiber was dyed and woven by the local inhabitants into a “cloth of hemp whose colors cannot but attract attention.” While Cole’s early twentieth-century study of the Bagobos highlighted abaca as the key textile used in their embroidered pieces of clothing and bags embellished with embroidery, shell disks and beads.

b. World demand
   
i. United States

The rest of the world, however, found abaca extremely useful primarily for cordage, not clothing. The top importers of abaca during the first half of the twentieth century were the United States, Great Britain and Japan. These abaca importers were also the Philippines’ chief trading partners in the same period. Already an established world fiber by the twentieth century, abaca first was used commercially a century earlier. The growth of shipping in England and the United States after the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the Napoleonic wars resulted to a search for better cordage. In 1819, U.S. Navy Lieutenant John White, after a trip to Manila, brought the fiber to Salem, Massachusetts, and by the late 1820s, the rope makers of Salem and Boston were using it extensively. Although abaca did not belong to the hemp family, American and European tradesmen called it *Manila hemp* after its port of provenance, and because it was used in an industry where hemp was the earliest known material for cordage.

The United States used “immense quantities” of the fiber because of its “lightness, strength and comparative durability.” A significant feature of abaca was its ability to maintain its tensile strength in seawater, which hemp fibers lacked. Thus, hemp had to be tarred, which resulted in heavier and less flexible cordage, while un-tarred abaca was lighter and more supple. Abaca was also the longest of any natural fibers which added to its durability and elasticity under certain conditions. It became a popular fiber for the manufacture of ropes and cables for ships, especially running rigging in the nineteenth century. The United States, which until the mid-nineteenth
century, used mostly Russian hemp, quickly adapted to abaca, while Britain, which was well established in the Russian hemp market, used abaca to a lesser extent. Significantly, the American consul in Manila considered it “the article of most importance to the commerce of the United States” by 1833. The U.S. Navy increased its use of abaca in the 1860s, during the American Civil War, and by 1871, was purchasing abaca exclusively.

Thus, for most of the nineteenth century, the United States was the major importer of abaca produced in Bicol, Leyte and Samar, garnering 82 percent of total abaca exports at its peak in 1847. In relation to the value of other Philippine export commodities, abaca competed with sugar between 1840 and 1895, claiming the top spot 13 out of the 55 years under consideration. Upon the arrival of the Americans in the late nineteenth century, abaca was the top export crop of the Philippines and the largest import of the United States from the Philippines, until sugar overtook it in the 1920s. The United States preferred the more-expensive superior grades – those that had undergone the best process of stripping, which had a whiter appearance than other grades of the fiber. Hence, throughout most of its rule in the Philippines, the U.S. was often the top buyer of abaca because of the high prices it paid, not necessarily because it bought the most in volume.

Aside from naval cordage, manufacturers also used abaca as the primary material for binder twine from the 1870s until the first decade of the twentieth century. Twine made from pure abaca was used in the Deering grain harvesting machine, while the McCormick reaper-binder employed a combination of abaca, sisal and henequen. When the two firms merged into International Harvester in 1902, abaca made up a lesser proportion of twine from then on. But the demand for abaca in North America continued. The adoption of mechanical grain binders by the wheat farmers on the U.S.-Canadian Great Plains and the corn farmers of the U.S. Midwest ensured that more than half of all the hard fibers imported to the U.S. in 1900 was used for binder twine. At that time, abaca was a significant material inextricably linked

---

7 There were alphabetical grades of abaca that the Philippine colonial government standardized in 1914, which in 1939, numbered 29 standard grades for cordage purposes, the highest grade being AB (Superior Current), and the lowest at W (Waste). (“The Abaca Industry in the Philippines” (Manila: Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1939), 5–6.)
to the American farmer’s economic well-being and an important element in America’s food security.\textsuperscript{77}

Consequently, it was the U.S. binder twine industry that pushed heavily for opening the hemp ports of Bicol when they were closed during the Philippine-American War. With the steady supply of abaca uncertain during the war, panic\textsuperscript{6} ensued over its astronomical prices in the U.S. commodity market. It was noted by one astute observer as “the sharpest contests...of the stock market...in connection with a product of the soil.”\textsuperscript{78} Numerous letters were written to the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government threatening “more dissatisfaction and political commotion” if the price and supply of abaca was not normalized, while American newspapers wrote about an impending famine if President McKinley did not open the hemp ports in the early months of 1900.\textsuperscript{79} Even the penitentiary warden of the state twine mills of Kansas sent a telegram to the President reporting that the “exorbitant price of hemp is interfering with operation.”\textsuperscript{80} Eventually, abaca’s high price and limited supply convinced binder twine manufacturers, led by the House of Morgan-financed International Harvester, to shift completely to cheaper and more plentiful sisal (or henequin) from nearby Mexico after 1910.\textsuperscript{81}

Such was the cachet of abaca that the loss of the binder twine market did not significantly dampen demand. In fact, abaca exports steadily increased in volume and value after the Philippine-American War, only dipping in value after World War I, and during the Great Depression, which witnessed a multi-industry decline.\textsuperscript{82} This steady growth was primarily due to two factors. First, through U.S. government consumption by its Navy, Army, Engineering Corps (especially in flood-control work), Coast Guard, and Lighthouse Service; and second, in the utilization of abaca cordage in other industries aside from shipping.\textsuperscript{83}

Consumption of abaca expanded to also include the oil industry which used it in cables for drilling derricks.\textsuperscript{84} The fiber was also widely used in the iron and steel industries, railroads, and other transportation systems; power transmission in the mining of coal, in construction and engineering projects, as well as the fishing, lumber and farming businesses.\textsuperscript{85} A small segment of the paper-making industry also used

\textsuperscript{6} Others claimed that the panic was caused by hemp traders attempting to manipulate hemp prices.
abaca for specialty paper, the most notable products being manila envelopes and folders.\textsuperscript{86}

By the early 1930s, the United States was importing the superior grades of JL, G and I, of which more than two-thirds of the supply came from Davao, prompting government fiber expert H.T. Edwards to say that “the American cordage industry is now dependent on the Davao abaca industry.”\textsuperscript{87} The American market was so “largely a market for Davao hemp,” that American exporters referred to Davao whenever giving advice to the U.S. government with regards to fiber tariff and trade policies in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{88} A year after World War II erupted in 1939, the U.S. government created a “National Stock Pile” whereby the U.S. Navy purchased abaca “on a larger scale than at any time in the past.”\textsuperscript{89} Between November 1940 and February 1941, the U.S. Navy bought only Davao I and J1 grades in weekly purchases of 3,000 to 5,000 bales that prompted the Philippine Commonwealth government to lobby for the inclusion of non-Davao grades in future purchases.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{ii. Great Britain}

The second largest abaca buyer during the first half of the twentieth century was Great Britain which also used the fiber for naval cordage within its empire and for export to the United States. The British cordage industry was similarly affected by the outbreak of the Philippine-American War in 1900, and their Ambassador to Washington relayed to the U.S. Secretary of State, the “serious inconvenience” being “experienced in the rope trade and other similar industries in Great Britain on account of the present uncertainty.”\textsuperscript{91} Britain, through its merchant houses, had been purchasing Philippine abaca since the middle of the nineteenth century, and at the turn of the century, was the top abaca buyer and the Philippines’ largest trading partner.\textsuperscript{92}

British pre-eminence in the abaca trade diminished after 1909, when the United States imposed tariffs considered among the most protectionist in the world at that time.\textsuperscript{93} Naturally, Britain was the first among the Philippines’ trading partners, including France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, to complain about the imposed tariff wall, noting the apparent inconsistency with America’s avowed open door policy on the Philippines.\textsuperscript{94} But, while Britain was the leading advocate of tariff-
free trade, its businessmen fully understood the crucial development relationship between a colony and the metropole, as candidly expressed by the chairman of an old Birmingham rope manufacturer that “he did not for one moment blame the United states” for looking after its own interests. The dominance of the United States in the Philippine abaca market was already predicted as early as 1904, when one of the largest British merchant houses in the Philippines, Macleod & Co., was subsumed under the American conglomerate International Harvester.

However, American preeminence in the industry did not completely destroy the British abaca trade in the Philippines. Several British agency houses survived the American colonial era, the most notable being Ker & Co., which has become the oldest business firm in the Philippines to date. In addition, Britain remained a strong second rival throughout the era of American occupation, its position buoyed by the large volume it bought at mid-range prices. In terms of abaca preferences, Britain and the United States did not compete directly for the same type of abaca. British rope makers preferred abaca that was not as well-cleaned as the higher grades which the U.S. bought. They believed that the whiteness of high grade abaca was unnatural and thus, adulterated. Unlike the U.S., which relied almost wholly on abaca when it came to naval cordage, Britain by the twentieth century also used African sisal and soft fibers from other colonial sources, including India. Furthermore, many of the commercial houses operating in the Philippines had both British and American partners and frequently used British credit facilities. Anglo-American partnerships in the trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic merchant houses meant British involvement in the Philippine abaca trade exceeded that of Britain’s official export numbers.

iii. **Japan and other countries**

Japan, unlike The United States and Great Britain, entered the abaca market as a significant buyer only in the twentieth century. Japan’s share of the abaca export market was not large in the first decade of American rule. In aggregate value from 1901 to 1909, Japan was ranked seventh in abaca exports, behind the U.S. U.K., Australia, Belgium Hongkong, and the British East Indies. But in the following two decades, Japan solidified its global position as the third largest buyer of abaca, next
only to the United States and Britain, rising from 6 percent of total abaca exports between 1909 and 1916, to 13 percent from 1917 to 1933.\textsuperscript{102}

Japan imported abaca of varying grades. It initially consumed medium grades for naval cordage like the British, but after the First World War, it expanded into the higher grades for alternative uses of the fiber in hat and paper-making.\textsuperscript{103} One of the significant new uses for abaca was the Tagal hat braids, created by skilled labor in Japan using special machinery for knotting hemp, whose finished products were sold both in Japan and, as a re-export, to the United States.\textsuperscript{104} Such was the volume of abaca braids being exported that the Philippine government created a new category for them in the Fiber Standardization Board. In the 1930s, Japan also bought the lowest grades, including ‘waste,’ ‘damaged’ and ‘tow’ grades, which workers in Japan carefully re-sorted to produce a cordage of “normal tensile strength.”\textsuperscript{105}

In terms of volume, Japan’s purchases exceeded that of the United States and Britain at certain times, especially during the Depression of the early 1930s. But because Japan bought low grades which translated to low prices, American and British purchases exceeded those of the Japanese in terms of value. Despite its late entry into the abaca market, but due to the fact that Japan had direct links to sources of supply – the Japanese-run abaca plantations in Davao – some Japanese exporters were also agents for European and British houses. Likewise, the two largest abaca producers in the Philippines, the Davao-based Ohta Development Co., and the Furukawa Plantation Company, were represented in New York by the American firms Hanson and Orth, and James Fyfe respectively.\textsuperscript{106}

Besides the United States, Great Britain and Japan, other countries also exported Philippine abaca for their own use. Canada and the Netherlands were among the top five abaca customers, while Cuba, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, and South Africa also purchased Philippine abaca in varying quantities.\textsuperscript{107}

c.  \textbf{Plantation agriculture}

Typical of Philippine agriculture, nineteenth-century abaca production was cultivated in small holdings, mostly in southeastern Luzon, and the eastern Visayas.\textsuperscript{108} Abaca was grown by family farms that sold the fiber to middlemen who then sold it to
a larger dealer, and/or to merchant houses, which functioned as the gateway to the international market. Economic historian Benito Legarda argues that the Philippine economy was opened up to global export trade because of the advent of the early nineteenth-century merchant houses – the demand side, and not due to the creation of plantations, or the supply side. This was one of the reasons why abaca cultivation in Bicol followed the traditional patterns of small-holder agriculture because the farms came before the merchant houses, and thus, the merchant houses had to adjust their buying practices accordingly. Davao, however, developed differently, because plantations were established first before the merchant houses arrived in town. For this reason alone, numerous financial and logistical difficulties were experienced by the early planters on the Davao frontier due to the absence of a market outlet that also provided ready credit.

Growing wild in Davao, abaca was first cultivated sparingly on lowland Davao haciendas in the late nineteenth century. Because Davao was isolated from the major trade centers of Manila, Iloilo and Cebu, it was not financially viable to mass-produce crops for an export market. Although large landholdings were claimed by Spanish-era settlers, only a few hectares were planted to crops, while the rest of the land remained in a natural state. One of the earliest known abaca haciendas belonged to Manuel Sanchez, a Spaniard, who started planting abaca in 1891 in the old Spanish settlement of Daron. Another, set up in 1893, was owned by Juan Awad, a Lebanese who arrived in Davao via Cebu as a travelling merchant, who then married into a Filipino settler family.

The first American to establish an abaca plantation was Captain James Burchfield who was with the 31st U.S. Volunteers, the earliest Army unit to be stationed at Davao. Even before he resigned from military service in July 1901, he had already acquired land from the “raw jungle out of which to make a plantation.” The sources do not say much about Burchfield’s motivation for cultivating the fiber known for cordage,

---

11 Other Spanish haciendas located in the old settlement of Daron belonged to Fernando Navarro, the Palacios brothers, Manuel, Gregorio and Damaso, while Hacienda Fiel in Dumoy was managed by Joaquin Basa. (Anonymous, “District of Davao,” *The Mindanao Herald*, February 3, 1909, Historical and Industrial Number edition, 76.)

1 Awad married Esperanza Cabaguio, daughter of Juan Panopio Cabaguio from Batangas who came to Davao in the late 1860s to early 1870s. (Benjie Lizada, Marissa Salonga-Tionko, and Stella Estremera, eds., *Hijos de Davao: Witnessing Growth* (Davao City, Philippines: Hijos de Davao, 2015), 37–39.)
but he came from Kentucky, which was the biggest hemp producer in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Capt. Burchfield was familiar with the operation of hemp farms, and their basic requirement of rainfall and fertile loam soil, two features which Davao had aplenty. By making some adjustments for the difference between growing Kentucky hemp and the abaca plant, Burchfield adopted farming techniques from his home state, such as evenly planting the crop a certain distance apart to enable mechanical plowing to be done. He laid out his seedlings in rows, nine feet apart (whereas for the smaller Kentucky hemp, it was only four feet), and went twice over the ground every four months with plows and disc harrows until his abaca were large enough to shade the ground to prevent the growth of weeds. Unsurprisingly, Burchfield named his first venture “The Kentucky Plantation.”

This modest beginning of abaca development in Davao set the stage for the decades that followed, as plantations were set up by varying nationalities. In 1908, more than forty American companies growing abaca along the coast of Davao Gulf were counted. Filipino participation increased through the years, from a few Christian Filipinos in the plantation business, and Bagobos and Guiangas cultivating abaca in their plots in 1905, to a report indicating that leading plantations north of the Davao River belonged to Filipinos in 1926. The Japanese, who first arrived in Davao as laborers in 1903, pioneered abaca production with the creation of the Ohta Development Co. in 1906, and with the establishment of the Furukawa Plantation Company in 1914, played a valuable role in Davao’s abaca industry. By 1930, the nationalities of plantation owners were diverse: 106 Filipinos, 62 Japanese, 24 Americans, 13 Chinese and 1 Spaniard.

The large-scale plantation agriculture adopted in Davao by its different inhabitants was the most significant development to happen to the Philippine abaca industry. While ownership of plantations may have changed hands and even nationalities, the plantation as an agro-industrial entity remained a constant feature of Davao agriculture. It also helped that the Moro Province government passed Act. No. 168 in 1906, granting tax exemptions to lands planted to abaca, coconuts, maguey, bamboo, coffee, cacao, rubber, gutta-percha and citrus fruits.
Being one of the largest of the five districts of the Moro Province, Davao had ample public land available for abaca plantations. Most Davao plantations were ventures of at least more than a hundred hectares in size, and in many cases reaching the 1,024-hectare limit. Quite a number of plantations were set up as corporations to avail the investors of the 1,024 hectare limit for land purchases, while some individuals applied for leases that also allowed 1,024 hectares for a period of twenty-five years, renewable for another twenty-five years. Although the size of the Davao plantations were dwarfed by those found in other parts of the world such as Hawaii, Brazil or Sumatra growing other crops, the use of machines and technology, an efficient land-labor arrangement, a well-functioning auction system, and eventually, an international port, created a logistical chain that enabled Davao to become the biggest abaca producing region in the world.

**Fig. 2.3.** An abaca plantation in Davao. Note the size of the plants in relation to the person on center left. Courtesy of *Monument: A History of the Columbian Rope Company.*

Along with large scale agriculture, the concept of modern scientific practices was often promoted by these plantations. By introducing improvements in the methods of choosing varieties, planting, irrigation and mechanization, abaca planted in Davao matured in nearly half the time, and grew four times as much to the acre. In nineteenth century Bicol, the mature abaca plant had an average height of 15-20 feet,
of which the trunk was about 6-12 feet, but in Davao, some plants grew to 30 feet in height with a 20-foot trunk width. By 1902, Davao abaca was developing the reputation of being the ‘finest and whitest grown anywhere, probably.’ If this earlier comment was not convincing enough, by 1914, Davao-grown abaca was already acclaimed as “the finest manila hemp fiber known to the world.” Such was the economic promise of Davao and its plantations that in 1909, Moro Province Governor Col. Ralph Hoyt, recommended that Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan, and its nearby smaller islands be called the ‘Mindanao Plantations.’

The colonial administration published a lot of reading materials on abaca, giving advice on its different varieties and growing conditions, including methods of production, harvest and stripping processes. Moreover, the Japanese plantations, followed by the Philippine government in the late 1930s, established experimental stations conducting research on how best to grow abaca. The laboratories, staffed by technicians and specialists, conducted research on the effect of soil, temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity and other climatic factors on abaca plants. The high yield and consistent quality of the abaca grown in Davao were attributed to systematic research, and these scientific findings were largely made available to the multinational planters in Davao.

From the standpoint of technology, the plantations had to depend on mechanization because there was little labor to be found in the vicinity. But when compared to the mechanized farms of the American wheat belt, the Davao plantations did not depend purely on machinery. Rather, mechanization complemented what nature, in the form of animal and water power, and human activity offered. Indeed, machines to clear the fields and plow the soil were used extensively, but motor trucks vied with the hardy carabaos, which were used in inaccessible terrain as beasts of burden. Even the much-publicized hagotans, portable mechanized stripping machines, had adjustable devices for varying power sources. They could run on water power, when located near the many streams on highland slopes, but after minor

1 In 1909, Davao had around 45 planters, and there were around five plantations in Lanao, some twenty in Zamboanga, three in Sulu and one in Cotabato. (Ralph W. Hoyt, “Annual Report of Colonel Ralph W. Hoyt, 25th United States Infantry, Governor of the Moro Province, for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1909,” Annual Report (Zamboanga, P.I.: The Government of the Moro Province, 1909), 7.)
adjustments, can just as easily run on gasoline and oil in areas where water sources were scarce.\textsuperscript{131}

When more migrants arrived in the 1920s and a relatively stable labor supply could be had, the Japanese improved on the American-style mechanized plantations, by stressing intensive human effort through their vaunted “clean method” of maintenance whereby workers shed their clothes and donned uniforms in the fields, and carried two bolos, one used only for trimming healthy plants, and the other for cutting down diseased ones.\textsuperscript{132}

In a similar manner, land-labor arrangements in these plantations were a cross between the traditional and the modern. The early American administrators tried to veer away from what was perceived as unjust conditions in the traditional share tenancy system, encouraging the plantations to pay daily wages in cash to the laborers, as befits a modern enterprise.\textsuperscript{133} However, Davao Census figures show a 2,065\% increase in the number of share tenants between 1918 and 1939, while there was a decrease (-58\%) of cash tenants in the same period. At a glance, it can be interpreted as a failure of the cash system, and a reversion to the traditional crop-sharing tenancy. But on closer inspection, Davao actually adopted the traditional crop-based compensation model and used it effectively within the framework of a cash-based plantation economy.

The practice observed in Lais Plantation in the 1920s is a case in point. There, abaca strippers were compensated based on an agreed amount per kilo of fiber cleaned, with the amount derived from the current market price of the dry fiber delivered at the warehouse.\textsuperscript{134} By the 1930s these sharing agreements were practiced in most plantations and came to be known as pakyaw contracts, wherein with slight variations, owners got 10\% to 15\% of the harvest and laborers received the balance of 85\% to 90\%.

Although, the pakyaw seemed similar to the crop sharing tenancy system of the older rice-growing Philippine provinces, there were two fundamental differences. First, the laborer got the larger percentage of the harvest, the reverse situation of the Central Luzon rice tenancy sharing scheme existing at that time. The scarcity of labor and the vast amount of land in Davao ensured that laborers had more bargaining
power than land-owners because the price of labor was so expensive while land was cheap. Second, and more importantly, crop payments could easily be converted to cash in a matter of hours, through the auction house. Japanese-run, but open to everyone regardless of nationality, the auction house developed in the 1920s, and came to be known for its transparency and fairness. Abaca producers, including Filipinos and Americans, got an optimum price as they participated in the weekly abaca auctions where agents of multi-national abaca exporters bid for their desired bales on a competitive basis.

d. Other economic drivers

Since abaca had successfully demonstrated how plantations could be made viable, coconuts were also grown under the plantation system, and became the second largest export crop of Davao. Used in the Philippines for a variety of purposes from food to furniture and lighting, and also exported as oil in small amounts in the nineteenth century, coconuts, or more specifically, its dried meat called “copra,” became a major export crop by the 1890s. In 1892, copra displaced coffee as the fourth largest Philippine export, and kept its position in the top rank in the twentieth century. Intimately connected to the world market, Philippine-grown copra was used in many European and American factories in the manufacture of soap, “butters” and margarine.

On Davao plantations, coconuts were usually a supplementary crop to abaca, while some farms specialized in coconuts as its primary crop. Within a large plantation, coconut trees were usually planted on the coast, while abaca was grown further inland, along the slopes. For example, the leading plantation on the west coast of the Davao Gulf, the Malita Culaman Plantation Co., planted 20,000 coconut palms and 180,000 hills of abaca in 1926. Some plantations, like the Christensen Plantation, shifted its major crop to coconuts after a year of drought since coconuts required less water than abaca. In other cases, scarcity of labor forced planters to cultivate coconuts because harvesting, drying and husking coconuts was less labor-intensive than harvesting and stripping abaca stalks. Estimates made in 1909 show that coconut plantings took up half of the land planted to abaca. By 1933, the ratio was

---

K Copra became the Philippines’ top export after the Second World War.
reduced to 17.5 percent, when coconuts were planted over 35,000 acres compared to 200,000 for abaca.\textsuperscript{144}

Although other forest products, such as wax and \textit{almaciga}, had long been barter commodities of the indigenous tribes in the regional trade networks of old, only the opening of the Davao international port in 1926 made the trees themselves a valuable export. Timber was the third largest export commodity of Davao by the late 1920s. Before then, a great number of logs were simply burned to clear the land for plantings, while others found uses in settler houses, plantation buildings and farming implements.\textsuperscript{145} Despite a 1923 military report predicting lumber to be one of the “great future industries of Davao,”\textsuperscript{146} the bulky nature of the commodity prevented it from becoming a major export while Davao was still a closed port with inadequate facilities.\textsuperscript{1} Within a year of the new port opening in 1926, lumber was being exported from Davao in huge amounts. It grew in value from ₱13,093.00 in 1927 to ₱404,032 in 1932, and ₱640,438 in 1936.\textsuperscript{147} By the 1930s, lumber and timber exports from the port of Davao often supplanted copra as the second biggest export earner.\textsuperscript{148}

The plantation-based agriculture of abaca and coconuts, and, the revenues gained from timber exports, created a viable local economy which enabled other businesses to flourish. Abaca dominated Davao exports, comprising more than eighty per cent of total exports throughout the years under consideration, but land planted to abaca, which comprised almost three-fourths (72\%) in 1918, declined to just half the number of farms (13,184 out of 26,251) by 1939.\textsuperscript{149} This showed that over the years, while the size of abaca lands still dominated the Davao landscape, the dominance of abaca over the fortunes of Davao decreased, as other sources of trade and income increased, among them coconuts, timber, palay, corn, coffee and cacao.

The research stations established by the Japanese corporations and the Philippine government proved especially helpful in the 1930s as they offered alternative ventures to offset the depressed prices of abaca, thereby keeping plantations from going bankrupt by offering alternative uses of the land. Although abaca was always of primary importance, the research stations also conducted studies

\textsuperscript{1} The logging industry was a natural offshoot of plantation agriculture since the government imposed forest charges on felled trees, and businessmen found it viable to sell the timber to compensate for the added expense. (Alfredo Navarro Salanga, “Elias P. Dacudao: A Biographical Narrative Drawn from Accounts by Family and Friends” (Heirs of Elias P. Dacudao and Alfredo Navarro Salanga, 1985).)
on other plants, and animals such as hogs, poultry and fish culture for commercial production. Through their research stations, the Japanese introduced ramie growing in Davao, and this created an alternative export crop that was grown by many Filipino landowners aside from abaca and coconuts. Moreover, research into commercial livestock became another key source of income because by 1939, some 3,721 hectares were devoted to livestock farms in Davao.

Mining as an industry in Davao started in the late 1920s. The first mining claim was submitted in 1927 for guano on Samal Island, but along with 174 other claims by local residents for asbestos, gold, iron, manganese and silver, were abandoned mainly for lack of capital by 1935. In 1937, substantial development and exploration for gold were undertaken by the American companies Davao Gold Mines and the Mindanao Exploration Co., Inc. in Pantukan and Compostela until World War II cut short their operations.

4. Communication and transportation technologies

a. Wireless

Davao’s progress would not have been possible without reliable communication and transportation infrastructure, two features often lacking initially on a far-flung frontier. During the Spanish era, there were no telegraph stations in Mindanao, and very few vessels called at its small harbors. Inhabitants eagerly waited for the mail ship which came at irregular intervals due to the monsoon cycle, to such an extent that they were isolated for months on end. It was indeed a remarkable event when the U.S. Army came to Davao, and started stringing telegraph wires for sending and receiving news, even if only official dispatches. But Davao was still peripheral to the newsmakers and engineers since the U.S. Army’s base of operations was in Zamboanga, and most of the military attention was directed towards the western part of Mindanao. Further reflecting this isolation, the overland cables, which ran parallel to the road and trails being built, only connected Davao to Cotabato.

The advent of wireless technology during the first decade of the twentieth century, ushered in progress as radio came to replace cables and wires, and made for better communication. From the beginning, the colonial government had great difficulty connecting telegraph wires across the Philippines. Lines were often ruptured
because the cables passed “over coral reefs with jagged edges” while “swift current[s]... often prevail between the islands, and the frequency and violence of the earthquakes.” ¹⁵⁵ Moreover, wires crossing the interior were often cut and taken away by the local inhabitants, and their iron poles taken down and even used as cannons by “enterprising outlaws.” ¹⁵⁶ For these reasons, wireless telegraphy was adopted, and the U.S. Army’s recent experience of installing such a system in the Alaska territory came to be a reference point for the installation of wireless telegraphs in the Philippines. ¹⁵⁷

The Board of Review recommended a high-powered wireless station for Davao in 1911, which by 1913 had become a 3- kilowatt radio station of the Telefunken system that had a range of 1,200 meters, and assigned the call letter WVO. ¹⁵⁸ It was available to the general public between 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, including Sundays and holidays. ¹⁵⁹ Wireless technology brought Davao in touch with the rest of the world as the Davao station was registered with the International Telegraph Bureau, and conformed with the current trends and practices of this global organization. ¹⁶⁰ As a consequence, Filipino and American wireless operators became the conduits of information between Davao and the outside world, despite having to request translations of the manuals and publications of the International Bureau because they were written in French! ¹⁶¹

By 1926, the government had reserved land for a larger Davao wireless station on a hill that locals christened “Wireless,” which by 1928, had a fixed service with common frequencies. ¹⁶² The following year, direct radio service through short-wave transmissions between the Philippines and the United States was inaugurated. ¹⁶³ A deferred telegram service was offered to Davao patrons in the 1930s, much appreciated by recent migrants, seeking to connect with their places of origin. ¹⁶⁴ Residents could keep abreast of world news – and the prices of abaca in the world markets – when the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) connected Davao via Manila through radiophone with the foreign capitals of London, Rome, the Vatican, Berlin and Paris in 1933, and Tokyo in 1934. ¹⁶⁵ On the eve of World War II, this center of Philippine abaca production was kept in touch with the world by three PLDT wavelength stations, and another under the jurisdiction of the Philippine Army. When the Second World War began in September 1939, The Philippine Army installed an additional 43.24 wavelength radio station, and another managed by the Bureau of Posts was put up on March 1941. ¹⁶⁶
Perhaps nothing was as crucial, more fought over, or as celebrated, as the Port of Davao. Its opening, closing, re-opening and threats of closure down through the years paralleled the destiny of the region and its people. The port was not only Davao’s foremost gateway to the world, and the main source of the cordage that helped run the industries and navies of global empires, but also presented a major challenge to capital-periphery relations.

When the Moro Province government built a new pier at Santa Ana, a mile and a half north of the old Bankerohan harbor, it proved the most expensive public works project for 1909, despite using timber contributed by local merchants and planters. Amounting to ₱29,940.42, the port construction took the lion’s share of total expenditures for wharves and sea walls undertaken by the government. Chosen for its better water and safer anchorage, the Santa Ana pier boasted a new custom house, several warehouses, and a road that connected it to the town center. The project encountered difficulty and delays as indigenous laborers and their supervisor, Junior Engineer A.T. Birnbaum, had to overcome a cholera epidemic, the difficulty of procuring materials, and the discovery of a soft bottom which required redoing work thought finished. The last incident proved a silver lining in disguise, because although it necessitated discarding a number of pilings, it resulted in the extension of the pier.

Citing the “public good requiring the speedy enactment,” the First Philippine Legislature declared the Port of Davao open on July 1, 1908. The port quickly came to be known for having the lowest cost of cargo handling in the Philippines. Davao avoided segmented handling of cargo common in other Philippine ports, having its arrastre service deliver goods straight to nearby warehouses or straight to the ships. Despite the “optimism and enthusiasm” of Davao planters, custom receipts were not as rosy. The new port only brought ₱1,138.26 in customs receipts the first year.

---

M By 1913, this road was bordered by “a beautiful forest of coconut palms” and nipa houses built high from the ground,” as observed by intrepid traveler Mary S. Ware. (Mary S. Ware, The Old World Through Old Eyes: Three Years in Oriental Lands (New York; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), 125.)

N Cholera spreading from the headwaters of the Agusan River, ravaged the town from early October 1908 until February 1909, taking 50 lives in the town, and a total of 507 in the District, a further 1,000 deaths is estimated among the hill tribes. (Ralph W. Hoyt, “Annual Report of Colonel Ralph W. Hoyt, 25th United States Infantry, Governor of the Moro Province, for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1909,” Annual Report (Zamboanga, P.I.: The Government of the Moro Province, 1909), 32.)
which decreased to P970.85 in 1910, the year that the wharf was destroyed by a typhoon. With no wharf, customs collections dwindled to just P257.61 the following year.  

In the aftermath of the typhoon, plantations had to rely on their own small coastal jetties to transport products on small launches to Zamboanga for transshipment. Complimenting this practice, the Moro Province government provided vessels to ply the coasts of the Gulf of Davao to pick up cargo “however small,” and bring it directly to Zamboanga. Consequently, Davao was closed as a port of entry on October 31, 1910, and its foreign trade now coursed through Zamboanga. What first appeared as only temporary measure, until the wharf could be restored, lasted for fifteen years, before the port was re-opened for international trade.

In the meantime, Davao had to make-do. The 50 to 60-ton merchant vessels that plied the coastal route often refused to take freight from the plantations, unless the hemp or copra were sold at the merchant’s price. The sole commercial shipping line that serviced Davao, the Fernandez Hermanos, only called at irregular intervals. Furthermore, it frequently refused cargo for unspecified reasons. The monopoly situation was so severe that Davao settlers felt it cost as much to get cargo to Manila as it did to ship it to New York.

In 1921, the repair of the Santa Ana port was completed, but its design had become inadequate to handle the many large ships taking Davao products. Since the larger vessels that dealt in the abaca and copra trade could not dock in Davao, the crops had to be shipped to Zamboanga or Cebu, which added to the transshipment costs. In other cases, contracted steamers sent by American buyers to take on Davao abaca for shipment to the United States, had to stop at Zamboanga for customs requirements, increasing the time and cost of doing business with Davao.

The high cost of shipping was one of the causes for plantation growth to slow down in the 1920s, as many planters held-off new plantings, while some hemp merchants in Manila avoided the Davao market due to the high transportation costs, as Mr. H.H. Boyle, a noted hemp exporter, explained:

I buy abaca and have considered entering the Davao market, but on account of the conditions in regard to freight, telegrams, labor and minor facilities, I have not
been able to see my way clear to enter that field of operations. One of the principal reasons is the monopolistic tendencies of the shipping companies which serve that port. Until competitive lines of commercial coast shipping in Davao are established and proper facilities are provided by the shipping companies, I do not see how money can be invested there. What I desire principally is that there be competitive lines in the service of this port and I believe it would benefit the hemp planters in that district.  

The return of Leonard Wood to the Philippines as its Governor General in 1921, emboldened Davao pioneer planters, many who knew Wood when he was Moro Province Governor, to request government support to lower shipping costs. On October 1922, Davao planter Orville V. Wood contracted the Admiral Dewey, a government ship run by the Public Utility Commission, and personally guaranteed a cargo of 3,700 bales of abaca. But due to a lack of cooperation among Davao planters, not enough bales were gathered, and Orville Wood bore the loss. The stress of this undertaking led to his eventual death that December.  

With the tragedy of Wood’s death as a somber reminder of the dire situation of Davao shipping, several petitions were sent to the government demanding improvements to the port of Davao. Twenty-two individuals of standing in Davao – merchants, planters, and hemp dealers – petitioned the Public Utility Commission in April 1923 for two government ships to service Davao to break the monopoly of Fernandez Hermanos. Towards the end of the year, the Davao City Chamber of Commerce, comprised mostly of Filipinos and Americans, advocated for the designation of Davao as an official port of entry, and the construction of a better port, as befits the second largest abaca producing region in the world. They asked for the support of the American Chamber of Commerce in Manila to get their measures through the Manila government.  

Then in March 1925, shippers of the ports of Cebu, Zamboanga and Davao also signed a petition for a regular government steamship service to Davao. Davao by this time was furnishing around three fourths of the exports credited to Zamboanga. Finally, through Act. No. 3260, the Philippine Legislature granted Davao a port of entry status from January 1926. The opening of Davao as a port enabled foreign shipping to call directly without the burden of the additional costs of transshipment in either Manila or Cebu. The Act also meant that Davao could now process its own immigration and customs collection without having the ships stop by Zamboanga.
But the port’s status was not yet secure. The politically well-connected Fernandez Hermanos had openly resisted government ships plying the Davao route. The owner of the line did so by filing at least two cases in the Philippine courts between 1923 and 1925 to protect their inter-island shipping monopoly. It was also said that the shipping firm opposed the opening of the port because Davao was perceived as an American enterprise.\(^{187}\)

In 1930, nationalist sentiment was used as a ploy when the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources recommended the closure of Davao port. The Secretary’s message, broadcast in newspapers\(^ {9}\) belonging to the nationalist camp, stated that the Port of Davao was a source of illegal Japanese migrants and was also disadvantageous to inter-island shipping because it sent products directly to Japan without the usual transshipments costs entailed in Zamboanga, Cebu or Manila.\(^ {188}\) Fortunately, other Manila dailies and some government officials opposed the Secretary’s recommendation, and the port remained open to international trade.

In line with its prominence as an international port, improvements were made to its infrastructure. In 1926, the construction of the approach section to the Santa Ana wharf was started as the first phase of port expansion, with the building of a reinforced concrete main wharf as the second phase. However, the legislature failed to make an appropriation for the second project so improvement work was stopped until further funds were allocated.\(^ {189}\) Between 1928 and 1937, the national government appropriated a little less than ₱400,000 for a project worth ₱2,000,000.\(^ {190}\) Therefore, improvements were done in a piecemeal manner over the years. The reinforced concrete pier extension was finally completed in 1928 which enabled it to handle ships within a depth of 30-feet. For the first time, simultaneous loading and unloading of two large ships was possible, and Davao stevedores by the late 1920s, held the speed record of loading five thousand bales of abaca in a day.\(^ {191}\)

\(^{0}\) One of its principal owners, Ramon J. Fernandez, was the erstwhile Mayor of Manila who helped bring about the Cabinet Crisis in 1923, when he resigned his post amidst anti-American sentiment over Governor General Wood’s effort to bring back American control in the Philippine insular government. The Cabinet Crisis, a period of non-cooperation between Philippine politicians mostly in the legislature with Governor General Wood did not abate until Wood died in office on August 7, 1927.

\(^{1}\) The Philippines Herald, owned by Manila-based shipping magnate Vicente Madrigal, and a close supporter of the Nationalista Party ran a May 24, 1930 editorial with the lines “By all means, Davao should be a closed port. It should be put back where it always belonged.” (Grant K. Goodman, Davao: A Case Study in Japanese Philippine Relations, International Studies, East Asian Series 1 (Lawrence, Kansas: Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Kansas, 1967), 11.)
In 1929, steel piles replaced the wooden ones, and widening of the pier from 9 to 15 meters was done in 1936. The following year, plans were being made for constructing two piers, cargo sheds on the marginal wharf, and a jetty or sand-break, aside from dredging and reclamation projects. By this time, not counting the foreign cargo ships that carried Davao’s import and export commodities, twice-weekly steamship services for passengers and cargo between Davao and Manila were offered by two shipping companies – one of them being Fernandez Hermanos.

Fig. 2.4. Santa Ana wharf with rail lines, 1930s. Courtesy of Vincent Garcia.

Though the Santa Ana pier easily accommodated small to medium sized vessels, especially those that plied the rivers and gulf, it needed costly and regular dredging to make it viable for the ever larger ocean-going steamers that were calling at Davao in increasing numbers. After considering the testimonies of several ship captains, the Commonwealth government approved the deep-water port of Catitipan, eight kilometers from the city center and already being used by the British-owned Asiatic Petroleum Company in the mid-1930s, as a secondary port of Davao.

c. Airports

Connecting Davao to other parts of the country through the skies went more smoothly than opening up its sea lanes since there were no entrenched interests to block Davao’s access to airlines. Air travel was clearly advantageous since it was only
six hours from Manila by air, compared to five days by boat, to reach Davao.\textsuperscript{196} Before a general air service was opened to the public in the mid-1930s, private companies and the military were already flying airplanes to Davao just a few years after they had become readily available in the United States. Davao had several air strips located near the town such as the Cabaguio and Santa Cruz airfields for commercial use, while flat areas in Ipil and Bassa Point, north and south of the town, were cleared of trees and shrubs to serve as emergency landing fields.\textsuperscript{197}

For the construction of the main airport of Davao, Francisco Bangoy,\textsuperscript{a} a Davao Representative to the Philippine Legislature, offered his coconut grove in Sasa for the site, and after protracted negotiations over the size of the area, its price, and road right of way, the colonial government was prepared to pay the amount of P200 per hectare for 18 hectares in 1934.\textsuperscript{198} But because the politician was already ill and died in 1935, and there was a counter offer from the Davao-branch of the Luzon Stevedoring Company of an alternative site which the latter was willing to donate, the Bangoy family gave the land to the government.\textsuperscript{199} On that donated site, the government built a macadam landing strip of 800 x 20 meters, gas and oil stations, and an air dome for planes and passengers.\textsuperscript{200}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{A commemorative postcard of the Davao-Manila inaugural flight and air mail service. Courtesy of davaocitybybattad.blogspot.com.\textsuperscript{201}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{a} Both locations of the new airport and the new seaport belonged to the extended family of Davao Representative Francisco Bangoy, whose son-in-law, Antonio Pichon was a classmate and friend of Manuel Quezon. (Benjie Lizada, Marissa Salonga-Tionko, and Stella Estremera, eds., \textit{Hijos de Davao: Witnessing Growth} (Davao City, Philippines: Hijos de Davao, 2015), 55, 94.)
On November 1, 1935, Davao was opened to commercial air travel and mail service when the Iloilo Negros Air Express Co. (INAEC) inaugurated its weekly Manila-Davao flight. The INAEC route flew from Manila to Davao via Cagayan, Misamis Oriental, and vice-versa, connecting Davao in a matter of hours to Northern Mindanao and Manila, and effectively relegating Davao’s physical isolation as a thing of the past.\footnote{1}

Through the roads that crisscrossed its landscape, the plantations encroaching upon its jungles, and wireless stations, ports and airfields providing linkages to the outside world, Davao’s transformation from an isolated frontier town on the edge of empires to a bustling city was almost complete by the late 1930s. In 1937, a young Davao, along with a much older Zamboanga, Cebu and Iloilo became chartered cities, by virtue of meeting tax-based financial requisites.\footnote{2} In a parallel growth spurt, the population of Davao Province jumped from 65,496 in 1903, to 292,600 by 1939, or a 350 percent increase in just four decades, with many of those counted in 1939 coming from migrant-settler stock.\footnote{3} In 1938, \textit{The Builders of Davao}, a local publication, paid homage to the multinational pioneers, planters, politicians, miners, professionals, entrepreneurs and “proletarians” who helped Davao grow, accompanied by accounts of on-going infrastructure projects. Its pages contained paeans to “the poor man’s Paradise” that developed out of “toil and sacrifice,” while acknowledging that there was still plenty of work to be done, as it called on its readers to make Davao “more prosperous and progressive.”\footnote{4} By then, Fr. Urios’ uncanny nineteenth-century prediction about Davao’s future progress had already come true on the eve of the Pacific War.

\footnotesize

\footnote{1}{Peter Schreurs, MSC, \textit{Mission to Mindanao 1849-1900 From the Spanish of Pablo Pastells, S.J.}, vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1998), 89.}
\footnote{2}{Tom Collier, “The Island of Mindanao,” \textit{The Manila Volcano}, March 8, 1902.}
\footnote{3}{Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, December 20, 1906,” December 20, 1906, 6.}

Ibid.


Burchfield, “Letter to Norma and Cyrus from Davao, Davao, Philippine Islands.”

Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 28.


Ibid., 65.


McKinley, “Instructions of the President to the Philippine Commission,” 8.


Ibid., 65.


James T. Young, “Letter of Professor James T. Young to the War Department,” November 2, 1901, 1, 2146 Roads & bridges, 1898-1913, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Young, “Letter of Professor James T. Young to the War Department.”


Liggett, “Report of Captain Liggett to the Adjutant General, Department of Mindanao and Jolo, Zamboanga, P.I.,” 11.

Ibid.


“Logbook of Letter Sent to the Commanding Officer in Davao,” July 7, 1902, 5.

Jay Morrow, “Report of Headquarters Department of Mindanao, Office of Engineer Officer to the Chief Engineer Officer, Division of the Philippines, Manila” (Zamboanga, P.I.: Headquarters Department of Mindanao, May 13, 1903), 11.

Ibid.


Liggett, “Report of Captain Liggett to the Adjutant General, Department of Mindanao and Jolo, Zamboanga, P.I.”

“Ibid.

“Ibid.


Morrow, “Report of Headquarters Department of Mindanao, Office of Engineer Officer to the Chief Engineer Officer, Division of the Philippines, Manila,” 12.

Ibid.


Joseph Ralston Hayden, “The President - Notes on Conversation with” (Cosmos Club, March 3, 1936), Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.


Ibid., 10–11.

Robinson and Johnson, Abaca: A Cordage Fiber, 21, 23.


88 Owen, Prosperity without Progress, 46; Sievert, The Story of Abaca: Manila Hemp’s Transformation from Textile to Marine Cordage and Specialty Paper, 1; MacDaniel, Statement of J.S. MacDaniel, Chairman Cordage Institute, 303.
90 Owen, Prosperity without Progress, 47.
91 Ibid., 46.
97 Ibid., 16.
98 “Philippine Hemp: Culture, Manufacture and Statistics” April 30, 1901, 9, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
99 “Open the Hemp Ports,” Boston Sunday Herald, January 1, 1900.
100 J.B. Tomlinson, “Telegram from Lansing, Kansas” ( The Departmental Telegraph Service, January 9, 1900).
104 H.R. 6653, A Bill to protect American and Philippine Labor and to Preserve an Essential Industry, 26.
105 MacDaniel, Statement of J.S. MacDaniel, Chairman Cordage Institute, 302.
109 Ibid., 1.
96 Owen, *Prosperity without Progress*, 65.
102 Ibid., 24,40.
106 “Manila Hemp” Its Prospects of 4,000,000 Filipinos,” 5; Hanson & Orth, “Memorandum from Hanson & Orth, New York to U.S. Navy Department, Department of the Interior, U.S. Treasury, Etc.,” July 26, 1941, 1, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
109 Ibid., 184, 211.
116 Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Murdoch University, 1984), 136, 155.
105


131 Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.


133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.
178 The National Coal Company vs the Public Utility Commission et al.
180 The National Coal Company vs the Public Utility Commission et al.
182 The Philippine Shipowner’s Association, La Compania Maritima and Fervandez Hermanos vs. Mariano Cui, Public Utility Commissioner, No. G.R. L-24672 (Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands December 2, 1925).
185 Ibid., 22.
186 Ibid., 153.
192 “Data on Port Works in the Philippines as of August 1937.”
194 Mikado Studio, Davao Wharf, 1930s, 1930s, Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.
196 R.L. Maughan, “Memorandum for the Governor General from Aeronautics Division, Department of Public Works and Communications,” Memorandum, (July 3, 1934), 1.
197 “Philippine Folder, Davao and Zamboanga Areas,” Supplement No. 2, AGS Terrain Study (Allied geographical Section, SWPA and Engineer Intelligence Section, OCE, August 13, 1944), Bhur Stacks, University of Michigan.
198 R.L. Maughan, “Memorandum for the Governor General from Aeronautics Division, Department of Public Works and Communications,” Memorandum, (July 3, 1934).
203 Ernesto Cortino, Davao History (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 77, 85.
204 Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1904), 284; Commission of the Census, Census of the Philippines: 1939 (Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1940), 6 Volume 1 Part II, Davao.
CHAPTER 3

TRAVERSING EMPIRE’S FRONTIERS

1. World fairs: Bagobos to America

World fairs – popular events in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – were instrumental in generating interest in Davao, particularly its “wild tribes.” Such interests revolved around the habits, material culture and natural landscape in which these “exotic” peoples lived. Moreover, because world fairs combined entertainment and social scholarship, science and technology, it generated lasting effects that propelled Americans and their institutions to move westward, across the Pacific in search of knowledge and to fulfill a civilizing mission.

When the United States acquired the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, world fairs were already a hallmark of imperialism. These fairs were staged by Western nations to inform their public, justify their rule over foreign lands and populations, as well as to entertain. The themes on display usually revolved around national accomplishments in science and technology, alongside a cultural display of other people and places, or the “savages” often brought from the farthest reaches of an empire. The British started the trend with Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations held at the Crystal Palace in 1851, which was modeled after the national industrial fairs of France established since the eighteenth century.¹ A century later, in celebration of the centennial of its Revolution, France held the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris where the two most popular attractions were the Eiffel Tower and a troupe of Javanese dancers in an ‘ethnological’ village.² This 1889 Paris Exposition, in turn, inspired organizers of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago to stage several similar village displays, utilizing the new science of Anthropology.³

At the Chicago fairgrounds, the location of the living villages of various American Indian tribes was followed by statues of a male and female student from Harvard and Radcliffe meant to depict the “advancement of [the] evolution of man,” signifying the link between savagism and civilization.⁴ The objects and artifacts displayed in these
ethnological villages laid the foundation for the Field Museum, which opened to the public in 1894. As the foremost natural history museum in the Midwest, the Field was associated with the activities of Laura Watson Benedict and Fay-Cooper Cole, who travelled to Davao in 1906 and 1910 respectively. They went to Davao to study its “wild tribes,” as well as collect their material culture for American museums. Both were pioneering students of Anthropology, the new social science discipline the Chicago fair helped popularize.

Fig. 3.1. Chicago World’s Fair Overview, 1893. The Anthropological Building is on the lower left. Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress.

Apart from Anthropology, the 1893 Chicago fair also placed the classic discipline of History squarely in the national psyche. In a memorable meeting of the American Historical Association held in conjunction with the fair, Frederick Jackson Turner presented his now famous frontier thesis. Turner’s thesis lent scholarly legitimacy to America’s quest for new colonial territories, especially as Turner argued the frontier was fast disappearing on the North American continent. The frontier thesis created a
way for the United States government and public to blend history and ambition together in order to join European powers in the game of High Imperialism. Turner’s thesis, in conjunction with the Evolutionary Anthropology popularized by the Chicago fair, helped rationalize the annexation of the Philippines in 1898. As the American frontier expanded across the Pacific to encompass the Davao wilderness, American soldiers and planters believed they were bringing the “future steps in progress toward a higher civilization” to the indigenous peoples.

By the time the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis was staged, the United States was already a Pacific power, with colonial territories in Hawaii, the Marianas, and the Philippines, and the nation was ready to present a world show. The organizers of the St. Louis Fair aimed to produce the “largest international exposition the world had ever seen.” Staged to commemorate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the size of the United States, the 1904 World’s Fair was nearly twice the size of the Chicago exposition, and its total exhibition space exceeded that of Chicago by more than a third. It had the backing of the most extensive Anthropology Department of any world fair and the distinction of the full support of the federal government from its inception. Among the objectives of the fair was to deploy Anthropology to create a fresh landscape that “made the acquisition of the Philippine Islands and continued overseas economic expansion as much a part of the manifest destiny of the nation as the Louisiana Purchase itself.”

The main proponent of government support for ethnological studies in the Philippines was Dean C. Worcester, former University of Michigan zoologist who was appointed to various positions in the Philippine colonial government. In 1904, Worcester was Secretary of the Department of Interior, and under his direction, the office of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands was tasked to document “practically every non-Christian tribe in the archipelago.” With the assistance of the Ethnological Survey, a large display of Filipinos was staged at the St. Louis’ World’s Fair. More than a thousand “native” Filipinos were brought to St. Louis in 1904, and made to live on the Philippine Reservation. Its name, “Philippine Reservation,” signified the connection between America’s recent past (i.e. the pacification and final

---

8 The Omaha (1898) and Buffalo (1901) fairs had their own Philippine Villages, but smaller in size, and placed at the midway which was the venue for exotic entertainment.
settlement of American Indians) with its present and future empire and the colonized Filipinos. The Philippine Reservation was a popular attraction at the fair, with some estimates noting that ninety-nine percent of fairgoers visited the ‘reservation.’

![Image of the Philippine Reservation at the St. Louis World's Fair](image)

**Fig. 3.2.** Weaving traditional patterns in the Bagobo Village located in the Philippine Reservation, St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904. Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress.

The Filipino contingent, comprising the largest group of human exhibits, included Igorot, Negrito, and Taosug tribes who were labeled as “dog-eaters,” “monkey-like,” and “savages,” and thus, garnered the most attention and curiosity from the American public and newspapers. The 38 Bagobos from Davao, living in their “authentic” village and often seen performing musical gongs or weaving intricate textiles, did not escape censure as well, and were depicted as “head-hunters” in the press.

However, the novelty and artistry of Bagobo material culture was strong enough to attract the keen interest of three female fairgoers, and influence their life choices. The sisters Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf from Worcester, Massachusetts and Chicago-based Laura Watson Benedict consequently journeyed to Davao to learn more about the Bagobos they initially met in St. Louis. From an institutional standpoint, the display of Filipinos at St. Louis, also brought Chicago’s Field Museum to the Philippines when another fair visitor, businessman Robert F. Cummings funded the Field’s first ethnological expedition to the Islands. Working for the Cummings Expedition, Fay-Cooper Cole and his wife Mabel completed their Philippine itinerary in Davao, studying its various tribes.
2. Personal and institutional journeys: Americans to Davao
   a. Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf

Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf were typical fairgoers, two of the nearly twenty million who visited the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. Like many of the “open-eyed and open-souled” visitors, the sisters possessed a small hand-held Kodak Brownie camera which was marketed at the fair. They posed with their subjects, and even noted some of the Bagobos by their names, indicating relationships formed at the fair. Elizabeth, who had musical training, was particularly impressed by Bagobo music, which was beautifully played even with damaged gongs. The sisters bonded with the Bagobos, and sympathized with their quarantine troubles due to a smallpox episode on their ship. Thus, the idea of going to Davao to study Bagobo music was formed at St. Louis. Two years later, and after a visit to another world’s fair in Portland for the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition where Filipinos were also exhibited, the sisters reached Zamboanga in April 1906, and Davao the following August.

Elizabeth described Davao as “the southernmost, most valuable and most beautiful of this land.” But it was also a place that had recently witnessed its Governor, Lt. Edward Bolton, slain by a disgruntled tribesman. The sisters were undaunted however, and built their house in the village of Santa Cruz, intending to stay for a long period. They believed in General Leonard Wood’s pronouncement that it was safe to go out “among the natives,” noting that the assassination was an isolated case as the Davao tribes never gave the Americans or the Spanish trouble before.

The Metcalfs’ fearlessness in the face of tribal unrest was certainly anchored in the trust they had in their Bagobo friends. This trust had its roots in St. Louis when the sisters first offered their friendship and sympathy to the visiting Bagobos who were in a foreign land. Now, back in their homeland, with the roles reversed, the Bagobos returned this friendship with exuberance. The Bagobo social network enabled the sisters to secure laborers to clear their land and build their house, with their tribal friends Angel and Etting in charge. The local chief even ordered a new ladder built for their house. The ties between the elderly Metcalfs and their Bagobo friends deepened.
during the 1908-1909 cholera\textsuperscript{9} epidemic in Santa Cruz, when their Bagobo house
helpers refused to leave them during the quarantine period – saying, “If the Señoras
can take care of themselves, they will take care of their children.”\textsuperscript{29}

In Santa Cruz, the sisters had frequent opportunities to pursue their study of
Bagobo music. Even in their home, domestic help often played their flutes while on a
break from chores.\textsuperscript{30} The most impressive time was listening to, and watching a
performance of the *kulintang*, an instrument comprised of multiple gongs. Elizabeth,
interviewed years later by a correspondent for her hometown newspaper, said that
when she heard a Bagobo musician play on 15 gongs at one time, she “never cared to
hear a symphony orchestra again.”\textsuperscript{31} The sisters tried to record the kulintang music
with a phonograph they brought to Davao, but they had trouble securing good
recordings.\textsuperscript{32}

Despite their interest in Bagobo music, the Metcalf sisters became subsequently
known more for their collection of material objects, such as Bagobo textiles,
aricultural implements, and weapons, rather than for their study of ethno-
musicology.\textsuperscript{33} They collected a broad range of Bagobo abaca garments, including
textiles utilizing unique weaving techniques.\textsuperscript{34} They also collected Bagobo-made
materials that incorporated store-bought cotton cloth.\textsuperscript{35} Their four-year long residence
in Davao enabled them to gather this unique ethnographic collection, due also to their
close ties with the Bagobos. These rare objects of material culture are now housed at
the University Museum of Pennsylvania, and in the National Museum of Natural
History of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{36}

While living in Santa Cruz, the sisters maintained friendly relations with a small
expatriate community comprised of two American planters, a Frenchman and his wife,
and the anthropology student, Laura Watson Benedict.\textsuperscript{37} Enterprising Americans they
met in Zamboanga encouraged them “to go into abaca in Davao,” but the two ladies
resisted making such an investment, reasoning that they were conservative risk-averse
New England people. Instead, they considered working in the civil service a more

\textsuperscript{9} The epidemic began in November 1908 in the village of Sirawan, between Santa Cruz and Davao town.
It quickly spread to other parts of Davao by December, infecting District Governor Capt. Allen Walker,
and prompted the Jesuits to close the church in Davao for several weeks. It ended by the middle of 1909.
(Macario D Tiu, *Davao 1890-1910: Conquest and Resistance in the Garden of the Gods* (Quezon City: UP
Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2003), 246–55; Miguel Alaix, S.J., “M. Alaix, S.J. to
Superior, 11 Dec. 1908,” December 11, 1908.)
sensible way to earn a living, and Elizabeth, during their last year in Davao, worked as a teacher of industrial arts in the Santa Cruz public school in the 1909-1910 school year.

After leaving Davao in 1910, the sisters remained in the Philippines for most of their lives. They relocated to Manila and opened a boutique called The Little Home Shop specializing in Philippine textile and cultural artifacts, while their house on Mabini Street was frequented by artists and friends interested in Filipiniana.38 Save for two long visits to the United States, Elizabeth and Sarah lived in Manila and Baguio until their respective deaths in 1923 and 1939.39

Fig. 3.3. Sarah Metcalf and Bagobo friends in her Mabini Street house, Manila, 1932. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology. 40

Before her death, Sarah was photographed with her Bagobo friends at the Mabini house in 1932 (Fig.3.3). The way several Bagobos beside her rested their arms atop Sarah’s chair, even touching her shoulder, reveals the long standing familiarity they had with the elderly American woman, and speaks well about the nature of their decades-long friendship.41

b. Laura Watson Benedict

Laura Watson Benedict arrived in the town of Davao in August 1906, at the same time as the Metcalf sisters were settling into Santa Cruz. Like the Metcalfs, Benedict’s
destination was the village of Santa Cruz, a few hours by launch southwest of Davao town. Santa Cruz was originally established as a *reduccion* for Christianized Bagobos in the 1880s, and by 1906, was surrounded by coastal plantations. She finally reached Santa Cruz in December, joining its small foreign community which also included the Metcalf sisters. As Bagobo enthusiasts, Benedict and the Metcalfs were acquainted with one another, with the Metcalfs at one point, photographing Benedict’s Bagobo collection. Although the three women were almost the same age (in their 40s), shared similar interests and the St. Louis connection, time spent with the “New England ladies” whom Benedict described as “good ladies” but “voluble talkers,” was limited.

Benedict hardly socialized with other members of the expatriate Santa Cruz community, preferring to study and collect Bagobo artifacts by befriending locals and inviting them to her home. The highlight of her Davao stay was witnessing the multi-day Bagobo feast of the *Ginum* at Talun, located in the interior, as no white person had ever before observed the ceremony. While she was not prevented from witnessing the important event, the Bagobos neither explained anything to her about it, nor told her anything concerning the separate little rituals they conducted during the four days of feasting. Nevertheless, she would later write a descriptive article about this ceremony for the New York Academy of Sciences.

A good portion of her time in Santa Cruz was spent teaching in the public school, which took most of the morning and early afternoon during the school months. She was a devoted teacher, daily leaving for school at 7:30 a.m. with only a cup of coffee because she had no time to prepare breakfast. She praised her Bagobo students as the “most brilliant and most interesting lot of children,” and compared them favorably to the Visayan children at Davao who had their “originality” and “initiative crushed” by Catholic education, and to American boys at Salem, Boston and San Francisco who she felt had shorter memories.

At her house which was a little more than a hut, a constant battle was fought with ants, termites and rats which left her physically and emotionally exhausted, affecting her eating and sleeping habits. “Weevils in the flour, ants in the sugar, picaninnies in the eggs, mice in the bacon, small shiny black bores in the fruit,” made
her lose appetite. She had to continually inspect her bedding and mosquito nets out of fear for the worm called duligun which locals told her can kill if they creep “into the ear or any part of the body” and lay their eggs there.

Benedict’s simple living conditions in Santa Cruz were very different from the life she was accustomed to living in Chicago. Before she came to Davao, she had been a graduate student of Dr. Frederick Starr, an Anthropology professor at the University of Chicago, whose course “The Louisiana Purchase Exposition Class in Ethnology” held at the St. Louis fairgrounds first introduced Benedict to the Bagobos in 1904. By Fall the following year, she was apprenticed at the Field Museum under its Curator of Ethnology, Dr. George Dorsey, and preparing for her fieldwork in the Philippines. Upon the advice of Dorsey, Benedict went to England, the Netherlands and Germany en route to the Philippines to observe anthropological displays in museums, and to further her understanding of the significance of material culture.

In June 1906, she was bound for Davao, with a plan to study Bagobo religious and material culture. During her fourteen-month stay in Davao from 1906 to 1907, Benedict was closely supervised by Dorsey who agreed that the Field might purchase her collection of material culture up to a value of $2,000 if it passed inspection. In the course of collecting Bagobo objects, Benedict even requested Dorsey to send her a large photograph of the museum so she could show Bagobos where all their belongings could be kept together – in the “large, beautiful house.”

The Field Museum photograph was one of the ways Benedict tried to gain the Bagobos’ trust so they would willingly sell their belongings to her. In dealing with the Bagobos, Benedict sought to understand their worldview and often used this knowledge to convince them to part with personal objects. For instance, when a Spanish-speaking Bagobo, Undal, explained that it was unlucky for him to trade his sinkali, a brass chain prized by his tribe, Benedict recited “Latin Catholic formulas” to ward off bad luck. After receiving the “benedicite of the Americana signora,” Undal, with “relief and satisfaction,” readily turned over his sinkali to Benedict in exchange for several pesos.

As a budding anthropologist, she was struck by the “rapidity with which the culture is vanishing” due to the capitalist incursions plantations had made into
indigenous places and traditional practices. She noted that wage “labor is spoiling the normal life of these people, not by little steps, but by great upheavals.”\textsuperscript{56} She urged Dorsey to send at least eight investigators to Davao, one for each major tribe, for at least a three-year period.\textsuperscript{57} In terms of her own fieldwork, she originally intended to stay in Davao for just one year but Benedict found Bagobo material culture to be so rich and varied that she planned to remain two more years. Convinced that “there is no such thing as rushing through... and sweeping up their things in a collection,” Benedict now planned to leave in June 1909.\textsuperscript{58} However, her work among the Bagobos was cut short in December 1907.

Her dire financial circumstance, the neglect of her sleep and diet, and her strained relationship with other Americans led to a mental and physical breakdown. Towards the end of her stay in Davao, she felt that her American neighbor, William Gohn, was competing with her in collecting Bagobo artifacts.\textsuperscript{59} In her paranoia, she believed that Gohn, a planter who owned the only general store in Santa Cruz, and thus had influence over his Bagobo workers, was conspiring against her.\textsuperscript{60} If other reports are to be believed, even the Metcalfs were no longer spared from the workings of her feverish mind, as she accused them of “trying to set the natives against her and were after her notes.”\textsuperscript{61} She was hospitalized in Davao, and upon the advice of Secretary of the Interior Worcester, Benedict was sent to Manila to be cared for by her sister.\textsuperscript{62} Eventually, she returned to the United States in September 1908, recuperating in California before reaching Chicago a few weeks later.\textsuperscript{63} 

Shortly after her return, she presented her collection of Bagobo material culture to Dorsey at the Field Museum. However, the value of the entire collection exceeded the agreed amount of $2,000, and Dorsey only purchased one item, a Bagobo skull.\textsuperscript{64} Offering an alternative means of sale, Dorsey then endorsed the rest of her collection to the American Museum of Natural History, which eventually bought the collection for $4,000 in 1909, but only after several months of “tortuous negotiations.”\textsuperscript{65} Eventually, Benedict graduated with a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University in 1914 and published her monograph “Bagobo Ceremonial, Magic and Myth” in 1916.

The state of Benedict’s health revealed her isolation from other Americans and her status as an outsider in that community, especially in terms of the tyranny of her
role as a cash-strapped student vis-à-vis the financial independence of the Metcalf sisters and the increased trafficking in material culture. Related issues about the birth of museums, collection building and the link between new institutions and colonialism also factored into the rather tragic end of her Davao sojourn.

c. The Cummings Expedition, Fay-Cooper and Mabel Cook Cole

Concurrent with the privately funded visits of Laura Benedict and the Metcalf sisters to Davao, the Field Museum was preparing for a major ethnological expedition to the Philippines, the first of its kind for the discipline of American Anthropology. The impetus for the expedition was born in St. Louis in 1904, the same place where the three American women’s interests began. But the Field Expedition took longer to realize because of its institutional nature, despite the urgency demanded by its financier, Robert F. Cummings.

The Philippine Reservation at St. Louis had so fascinated Illinois grain merchant Robert F. Cummings, that he approached the Field Museum in late 1905, offering a large donation of $20,000 to fund anthropological research in the Philippines for the benefit of the “people of Illinois.” The generous sum implied that the expedition was meant to be exhaustive. The research program entailed sending a number of investigators to different parts of the archipelago largely guided by the locations of the “wild tribes” found at the St. Louis Fair, namely: to the mountain villages of Northern Luzon for the Igorots, the jungles of Bataan for the Negritos, the islands of Sulu for the Taosugs, and the hills of Mindanao for the Bagobos. The investigators could later expand the scope of their studies to other lesser-known tribes when they were in the Philippines.

Dorsey, the head of the Field’s Anthropology Department, had difficulty locating the right people to carry out a project of such magnitude. He initially invited anthropologists based in New York, but ultimately decided to employ museum staff at his disposal. Dorsey sent S.C. Simms (assistant curator of ethnology), Fay-Cooper Cole (one of Dorsey’s assistants), and William Jones, a “distinguished linguist” based in Chicago, to the recently acquired archipelago. Among the team members, only Cole

---

*C* Earlier expeditions were zoological ones, such as the Steere Expedition conducted by the University of Michigan in 1887-1888, and the Menage Expedition of the Minnesota Academy of Natural Sciences in 1890-1892.
went to Davao and other parts of Mindanao. Notwithstanding Dorsey’s knowledge of Laura Benedict’s financial difficulties in Davao, she received no subsidy from the Cummings fund, despite Dorsey’s letters to Cummings listing her as part of the expedition team.\textsuperscript{71} Cole was sent by Dorsey to several universities to prepare for the Philippine work, like Benedict before him. He spent three months at Columbia University and another three months at the University of Berlin before arriving in the Philippines with his new wife Mabel, in January 1907.\textsuperscript{72} The Coles eventually reached Davao on their second visit to the Philippines, in July 1910, and stayed there until February 1911.\textsuperscript{73}

Laura Benedict’s dire financial circumstance and living conditions stood in stark contrast with that of Fay-Cooper Cole, who, as a member of the Cummings Expedition, did not experience any financial problems whatsoever. As a staff member of a famous institution, namely, the Field, Cole readily gained the support of influential Americans on Mindanao, from the Moro Province Governor, General John Pershing, to planters who were equally influential in the localities where their plantations operated. Consequently, Cole was able to obtain copies of the late Governor Bolton’s private notes about the various tribal peoples of Davao.

Cole considered Davao, from the standpoint of museum collecting, as one of the “richest districts in the Islands,...far richer than that north,” due to the extensive material culture of its numerous tribes.\textsuperscript{74} Davao was also turning out to be one of the most expensive places for collectors of material culture by the time Cole reached there in 1910, as he explained to Dorsey:

“The beaded clothes and handsome weapons I have already seen, assure us of a striking collection, but the prices are high and are mounting higher continually for since the mutiny of last year, the regular troops have been put in here, and the officers’ houses are already small museums. Regular troops mean a monthly transport with its crowd of ‘joy riders’ who buy everything they see regardless of price.”\textsuperscript{75}

Even before the aforementioned 1909 mutiny, the Bagobos had already jacked-up the prices, astute traders that they were, when demand for cultural objects rose due to the collecting activities and competition among the Metcalfs, Benedict, and Gohn for Bagobo items. Naturally, prices rose in conjunction with demand, and Cole and his contemporary ‘joy-rider’ collectors, only served to raise prices higher by 1910.
In part, plantation stores also played a role in encouraging Bagobos to sell personal effects since it had become convenient to purchase ready-made food and objects from these retail outlets.\textsuperscript{76}

Nevertheless, Cole gathered a “first rate” collection of material objects not only from among the Bagobos but also from other Davao tribes as well. In fact, Cole became the “champion field collector” for the Field Museum as almost half the total of the museum’s Philippine collection was acquired by him, including six hundred items of Bagobo material culture he obtained during his Davao fieldwork.\textsuperscript{77}

The Coles stayed in Davao Province for seven months, hosted by American abaca planters and government-connected local leaders in lowland municipalities and highland villages. They stayed in plantation houses and met Americans, Englishmen, and Swedes, including prosperous ones, unlucky ones, some who had “gone native,” and those who spent lonely hours reading poetry or philosophy.\textsuperscript{78}

While studying the Bagobos who lived in the foothills of Mt. Apo, they stayed in the house of Datu Tongkaling who acted as their host. Escorted by Tongkaling, they observed the intricate process of weaving abaca textiles, and witnessed ritual gatherings in the great house where people told stories, played the agongs, and capped the evening with rhythmic dancing.\textsuperscript{79} Through personal connections with an American planter, the Coles also went to the neighboring Mandaya country on the eastern side of the district to study the houses built atop trees, escorted by Lenawan, a Mandaya headman. Many members of the tribes, the Coles learned, were descendants of slaves and castaways, incorporated into the local community. But they could not distinguish master from servant, unless they were told so.\textsuperscript{80}

The Coles’ visit to Davao culminated with a great typhoon that felled giant trees, and a malaria fever that left the couple bedridden for days. They recuperated in the house of pioneer planter, Captain Burchfield, and were cared for by U.S. Army doctors, and a Protestant mission nurse newly-arrived from the United States. Datu Tongkaling came down from the hills to bring them an anting-anting to ward off illness and evil, and he saw them off when the Coles left Davao for Manila, still weak with malaria.\textsuperscript{81}

When back with the Field Museum in the United States, Fay-Cooper Cole had the distinction of being the first American to publish a monograph on the Davao tribes in
Mabel, his wife, published her recollections of their Philippine trip sixteen years later, with an introduction written by George Dorsey.

It is worth noting that at the same time the Coles conducted their fieldwork in Davao, John M. Garvan, a former government schoolteacher-turned merchant, was undertaking his own study of the Manobos who lived in the Agusan River Valley. In 1910, Worcester’s Bureau of Science had “temporarily engaged” him to complete his ethnographic investigations in the interior of eastern Mindanao. He was reported to have “worked, ate and danced” with the Manobos, and joined them in hunting and fishing the lakes and tributaries of the Agusan, as well as attending their religious feasts. Cole’s study area slightly overlapped with Garvan’s when the former was visiting the Mandaya on Davao’s east coast. Some of Cole’s Mandaya lived and travelled as far north as the Agusan Valley, while there were Manobos who resided in eastern Davao that Garvan included in his study. But the two men hardly crossed paths, because Butuan, rather than Davao, was Garvan’s base, where most of the Agusan Manobo came to trade since early times.

3. In flux: American interest in the Philippines

The first decade of the twentieth century was the heyday of American anthropological interest in the Philippines. In Davao, as shown by the personal and institutional interests of the Metcalfs, Laura Benedict, The Field Museum, and the Ethnological Survey of the Philippine Islands conducted by the insular Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, there was a burst of studies on Davao ethnology. But this wave of interest and enthusiasm had abated by the time Cole’s Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao appeared in 1913, as the novelty of Philippine tribal groups in the American public’s mind was waning. Earlier, from 1911 to 1912, Dean Worcester had tried unsuccessfully to sell his films on the “world-famed head hunters” of the Mountain Province to a U.S. distributor.

Evolutionary Anthropology, which Social Darwinism and the world fairs popularized, was now giving way to a more academic Anthropology – one based on

---

86 While Worcester’s book on the Philippines, published in 1914, was favorably reviewed, the book, however, had to rely on people connected with the insular government, like William Cameron Forbes spending “several thousand dollars” to boost circulation, and an active circulation in American libraries. (Rodney J. Sullivan, Exemplar of Americanism: The Philippine Career of Dean C. Worcester (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), 177-178.)
graduate level university programs that insisted upon empirical evidence and tended to avoid the earlier overgeneralizations of the evolutionary approach. Much of this new direction in disciplinary thought was credited to the influence of Franz Boas, who from his academic base at Columbia University, mentored a generation of students who took on leadership positions in the field in American universities. Both Fay-Cooper Cole and Laura Watson Benedict were Boas’s students at Columbia. The academic direction that the discipline of Anthropology took as a social science, owing largely to Boas, negated the sensationalism and entertainment aspects of displaying indigenous peoples in fairs and other public venues.

By the time Benedict had published her work on the Bagobos in 1916, the Philippine colonial government’s office of Ethnological Survey had already been discontinued. Attendance at world fairs was also declining. That same year, San Diego’s Panama-California Exposition closed with only three and a half million visitors. A year earlier, San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 -- where Philippine abaca was displayed -- had attracted a million less than the St. Louis exposition a decade earlier. By 1926, attendance at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial International Exposition was so low, that the fair organization went into receivership. When world fairs became popular again in late 1930s America, Anthropology, as the science of man, was no longer in the spotlight, having been replaced by industrial technology and “hard” science, with the future of aviation capturing the imagination of a nation.

For some Americans then, their interest in anthropological encounters within the confines of the empire’s frontiers had prescribed boundaries. Sarah and Elizabeth Metcalf, Laura Watson Benedict, and Fay-Cooper and Mabel Cole reached those limits. Even the colorful John Garvan, who “went native” in eastern Mindanao, eventually returned to the United States in the mid-1920s, and was affiliated with the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkley. His major work on the Manobos published in 1931 by the federal government sold for $1.00.

The declining ethnological interest in the Philippines is reflected in the Field Museum’s Philippine Collection purchases (Table 3.1) where there were no large acquisitions from 1923 to 1953. This inactivity and lack of interest though was not
peculiar to the Field alone, since the Museum noted that it “reflect[ed] a very general phenomenon” during the interwar years when “Americans in the United States almost stopped thinking or writing about the Philippines.”

There were several reasons for this turn of events.

In the broadest context, world events eventually turned American attention towards Europe after 1914, and the Philippines receded further into the background of American foreign affairs. Attention remained focused upon war-torn Europe after World War I – where former governor of the Moro Province, General Pershing, had led a victorious expeditionary force. Americans from the public and private sectors now played important roles in the subsequent rebuilding of the global post-war economy.

Apart from World War I and its aftermath, the changing American colonial policy regarding Philippine independence also contributed to diminishing American interest in the colony. The Republican Party which oversaw the annexation of the Philippines, lost the 1913 elections, having been in power since 1897. The Republicans had advocated a policy of retaining the Philippines indefinitely, with many believing that Filipinos were incapable of self-rule. But when the Democrats took control of the

---

**Table 3.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Acquisitions</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Acquisitions</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Acquisitions</th>
<th>Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893-97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1923-27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1953-57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-1902</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1928-32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1958-62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-07</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1933-37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1963-67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1938-42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1968-72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1943-47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1973-77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1948-52</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1978-82</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White House in 1913, it signaled a change in Philippine colonial policy because they pushed for Philippine independence as soon as possible. Woodrow Wilson’s victory speech in Virginia set the tone when alluding to relinquishing Turner’s frontier. The newly-elected President stated that “the Philippines are our present frontier, and we don’t know what rich things are happening out there, and are presently, I hope, to deprive ourselves of that frontier.”

In the Philippines, Governor General Francis Burton Harrison championed Filipinization which aimed to replace American government officials with Filipinos. Consequently, this discouraged Americans in Mindanao from staying longer in the Islands. A colonial official in Agusan confided to Worcester his worst fears that “most of us are going to be pushed aside” with Filipinization, and seriously considered an alternative career as a farmer in Texas, planting alfalfa. The promise of eventual independence and more government positions for Filipinos was written into the Jones Law, which was passed in 1916. Subsequently, the level of American interest about the Philippines no longer matched the early years of the previous decade, and anthropological expeditions to the Philippines, and Davao, in particular, suffered the same fate and general lack of interest.

4. The University of Michigan

The only exception was the University of Michigan, which managed to send an expedition to the Philippines, and Davao, in the 1920s. This expedition was made possible due to the support of its alumnus and former Philippine government official, Dean C. Worcester. It was logical that the University of Michigan should undertake this lone expedition since the University’s long standing interest in the Philippines was forged well before the archipelago became a colony of the United States.

The Philippines was one of the countries visited by Michigan zoologist Joseph Beale Steere in the course of his 1870-75 expedition to Peru, Ecuador, Formosa and the Moluccas, which concluded by bringing a Filipino student, Mateo Francisco, to study in Ann Arbor. When Steere returned to the Philippines in 1887-88, among the members of his expedition were Francisco and Worcester. On one hand, Francisco, born in Zamboanga to a Tagalog father and a Visayan mother who both escaped Muslim captivity, had just finished his university education and was returning to the
Philippines. He would provide the expedition with his indispensable knowledge of Philippine animals, as well as his ability to capture them. Worcester, on the other hand, would have his first trip to the country that would figure so prominently in his future life. In his later endeavors, Worcester would often rely on Francisco as his translator. Celebrating the bond between the University and the man from Mindanao, the 1927 alumni publication of the University of Michigan considered Mateo Francisco as “the first Filipino Michigan pioneer.”

Over the years, the University’s institutional interest in the Philippines would be sustained by more than a hundred professors, alumni, and students - Americans and Filipinos - “doing their share in the development of the Philippines.” One of these Michigan men was the last Vice Governor General of the Islands, Joseph Ralston Hayden, who with his wife Elizabeth, would leave accounts of their travels to Davao. Such was the University of Michigan’s involvement in early Philippine colonial matters, that during William Howard Taft’s tenure as Governor General he often called his cabinet together by saying, “The University of Michigan Club of the Philippines will come to order.”

a. The Guthe Expedition

The 1922-1925 Guthe Expedition sponsored by the University of Michigan had its origins in Worcester’s amateur Philippine archeological digs conducted after he left the colonial bureaucracy. Worcester, with the help of local guides and workers, found “Asiatic ceramic” fragments in Visayan caves that fascinated him. He made a special visit to Ann Arbor in 1922, submitting to his alma mater a project proposal for a large-scale Philippine expedition. He offered to provide the expedition use of his schooner, the Anne V. Day, access to a laboratory in the Cebu compound of his company the Philippine Refining Corporation, and his own archeological collection, as well as the location of his own archaeological sites, and network of Filipino informants and workforce.

The lack of American interest in the Philippines in the 1920s meant that the expedition was initially rejected by the University’s Board of Regents, prioritizing other projects from its general fund. The University’s attention was primarily directed at the

---

8 For example, Davao City’s first mayor, Santiago Artiaga, was a class of 1904 Engineering graduate from the University of Michigan.
history and culture of the eastern Mediterranean, in an effort to save ancient papyri from areas in the former Ottoman Empire. However, one of the biggest donors to the papyri collection, Horace H. Rackham, eventually provided thirty thousand dollars to fund a three-year expedition to the Philippines.

Carl Eugen Guthe, a Harvard-trained archaeologist who specialized in Native American archaeology at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, was selected to head the expedition. Despite no training in Asian archaeology, Guthe was a University of Michigan undergraduate whose name was familiar to Worcester. Guthe accepted the mission, not because he had an affinity with the Philippines, but rather upon agreement that the University would create a separate Museum of Anthropology, and establish a Department of Anthropology in the College. The proposed Museum of Anthropology was to hold the anthropological collections then housed in the Museum of Zoology, the collections acquired in the Philippines, and future anthropological collections.

Guthe’s archeological explorations in the Philippines were conducted from 1922 to 1924, and covered 542 sites mostly in the Visayas and Mindanao, resulting in 4,500 items catalogued. Due to its geographic scope, and brief duration, the expedition was purely exploratory. Thus, only a few extended excavations were undertaken – mostly in the Visayas, near the team’s laboratory on Mactan Island, Cebu. The team only had two excavation sites in Davao, and Guthe concentrated his own archaeological efforts in other areas of the Visayas and Mindanao.

Although his Davao archaeological findings were few, Guthe left an account of an eleven-day trek accompanying a Constabulary inspection tour through the interior of northern Davao. He undertook the trip in June 1924 and his account is valuable for its cultural and topographical information and observations. He was invited on this trip by a Constabulary officer he befriended in Zamboanga, Major Guy O. Fort, whom, among other things, shared a mutual interest in South American anthropology and ethnology. Fort had been with the Constabulary for almost twenty years and had been assigned to many posts in Mindanao, including eastern Davao. They were joined in the trek by another Constabulary officer of Davao, Captain Leslie Stevens, who had served in France during the Great War.
Map 3.1. Places along the Saug River visited by Guthe and his group, June 1924.

Aided by several Filipino navigators and multiple cargadores, the tour was done by hand-paddled launch along the Saug river, and then by foot, across the northern Davao interior. Leaving the Anne V. Day anchored at Davao town, Guthe took a government launch north to Tagum where they started the trek. From Tagum, they went further north, navigating the Tagum River until it changed into the Saug River at Pagsabangan, the farthest settlement where they stopped for coffee following a Constabulary custom. On the Saug River, they periodically stopped at small riverine villages with names such as Napungas, Macgum, Camansa, and Bankerohan, and spent the nights in Constabulary rest houses with thatched nipa roofs, and woven palm tree floors. They navigated the Saug until it traversed the great Agusan River at the town of Monkayo.

There were no roads yet in this part of the interior. Hence, the river provided the major means of transportation that kept the northern Davao frontier, its landscape and its people, in a constant state of flux. They visited the old village of Inugutan now nearly deserted. Most of the people had moved to the new village of Bankerohan, where a new school was under construction. The town of Monkayo – “practically untouched by Christian civilization,” had also moved its location a kilometer away the
year before.  In the old town, where some empty houses still stood, the vegetation had already removed the “evidences of man’s temporary occupation of the land.” This movement and relocation of town and people were not uncommon since they had passed “old clearings fairly well returned to jungle” on the way to Mabantao as well.

Fig. 3.4. The new settlement of Bankerohan, recently claimed from the forest which can be seen at the background. Courtesy of the Carl E. Guthe Collection.

But pioneering settlers appeared to be winning the struggle against the wilderness since the survey team saw many abaca plantations appear at intervals in the forest. Interspersed among the plantations were villages with a “double row of houses boarding a wide street,” a Constabulary station built by a Filipino, and a new town defined for most of its length by bamboo fences intricately woven in a pattern. They passed along the trails from Monkayo to Camansa such a steady stream of men, women, and children returning from the coast that Guthe described it as a whole village traveling on foot!

Guthe was struck by the mix of languages and ethnological groups he met on the trip. He noted the different languages people spoke in the interior, of “English speaking natives” in Maniki, about a Tagalog officer at Mabantao who was learning English by translating Spanish, while in Bankerohan, the Filipino school teacher “spoke good English” and the town’s presidente spoke only Mandaya. Nor did physical
features escape his eye, as Guthe documented through notes and photographs, the wavy hair of the local *cargadores*, as opposed to the straight haired Visayans.¹²⁴

While the Davao trip was just one of many he took during the course of his three-year expedition, it left an impression, and further reinforced what he observed among the peoples of the Philippines. In his report about the significance of the Philippine expedition in the *American Anthropologist*, he concluded that the “broad ethnological situation in the Philippines is roughly similar to that in this country [the United States], in that many different culture areas exist which are more or less closely related.”¹²⁵ He then called on his fellow anthropologists to do further field work in the Philippines in order to gather field data before “foreign influences” transformed indigenous cultural practices.

The clarion call for further ethnographic study partly stemmed from a personal sentiment that Guthe felt during his Davao trek, when he was surrounded at times by a pristine landscape and nature. Walking at dusk near the forests of Napungas, Guthe noticed the “strangeness and romance of being in the heart of the pagan country, where majority of people live a life at great variance to our own.”¹²⁶ Further along in the journey, Guthe dreamt of becoming the “Kipling of the Philippines,” hoping to capture the essence of the encounter between East and West in Philippine life.¹²⁷

Like other world travelers and investigators before him, the ‘spectre of comparison’ appeared as well.⁶ On several occasions, he was reminded of his fieldwork in the American jungles. The tall trees and undergrowth of the Davao forest resembled the jungles of Guatemala; and the wild and rugged scenery of the upper Saug, a “beauty which untouched forest alone can have,” was reminiscent of Pecos, New Mexico.¹²⁸ Not surprisingly, Guthe, Fort, and Stevens often spoke of the savage nature of the Great War during the trip, including Steven’s experience as a soldier in France. These conversations undoubtedly added to the “strangeness and romance” of meeting multi-cultural Filipinos and tribal Lumads in a world very different from war-torn Europe or industrializing America.

---

Guthe, while obviously concerned about the prospect of vanishing indigenous cultures, also felt nostalgic about the end of the old frontier days in Davao. He thought it “almost a crime to let the yarns disappear with the scattering and dying of the old timers.” Guthe praised the local progress the Constabulary had made in the seven years since it established their camp in Mabantao, and brought a “civilized” way of life to the once “wild” district. However, at the same time, he felt dread that “equal progress in the next seven” would eliminate the indigenous cultures he so valued as an anthropologist. Like Laura Watson Benedict, he dreamt of sending a multidisciplinary scientific expedition to Davao. He thought that at least two ethnologists, a botanist, and a zoologist should spend three years in eastern Mindanao, utilizing Davao town as their headquarters – “where there is an American colony and where the wives will have diversion and social intercourse.” But unlike his female counterpart, who was there twenty years earlier, Guthe considered Davao to be a place already with the comforts of civilization and felt that the wheels of progress could not be stopped. He only wished that a cultural record be made of what was going to be lost in the process of inevitable future agricultural and economic development.

The three men spoke about a wide range of matters during the trip – the Constabulary in the Philippines, Mayan civilizations, the Philippine government, and the nature of civilization in general. Towards the end of the journey, the discussions tended to focus upon the American presence in Mindanao with his friend Fort, whom Guthe respected for his “inexhaustible fund of knowledge and experience.” They spoke about American attitudes in the Philippines, Mindanao’s population and economy, and its future possibilities. But most telling was what the older man said about the American colonial experience in Mindanao, which Guthe considered both insightful and important:

“After an American has been in the islands six months he [thinks he] can easily solve the Philippine Question. At the end of a year, he realizes that his earlier conclusions were based on incomplete knowledge, and at the end of two years he knows the problem is so complex that no one man can solve the problem fairly and justly.”

[The “Philippine Question” refers to the status of the Philippines as a colony of the United States, as represented by the positions of the two political parties of whether to retain the colony or agree to its independence. This debate is very much colored by the prevalent belief of most Americans and Europeans at that time, that the Filipinos, as “Orientals,” were not civilized enough to govern themselves.]
b. Joseph Ralston and Elizabeth Hall Hayden

Fort’s observations proved a fitting challenge for another Michigan man, Joseph Ralston Hayden. Hayden, a scholar and bureaucrat, followed in Worcester’s footsteps when he was recruited from the University of Michigan into Philippine government service between 1933 and 1935. Prior to his appointment, Hayden was already considered an expert on the Philippines. He had written several articles about the archipelago and updated Worcester’s book, *The Philippines: Past and Present* in 1930. In 1942, his major work, *The Philippines: A Study in National Development*, would be published, which included coverage of Davao and the Japanese presence there.

Hayden’s interest in the Philippines was nurtured early, particularly through stories he had heard from an uncle who served with General Funston and from a cousin who had been Admiral Dewey’s flag secretary. In 1910, upon graduation from Knox College, Illinois, Hayden began his career in the History Department of the University of Michigan, and eventually received his doctorate in political science from the University in 1915. In 1922-23, with his wife, fellow alumna Elizabeth Olivia Hall, he visited the Philippines as an exchange professor at the University of the Philippines. They returned again in 1926, when Hayden accompanied Col. Carmi Thompson surveying conditions in the Philippines as a special correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor. Another Philippine visit in 1930-1931 was made under the auspices of a Carnegie grant from the University of Michigan’s Faculty Research Fund, which once again, affiliated him with the University of the Philippines.

i. Davao from the ground, 1931

In 1931, the couple traveled to Mindanao, and trekked from Cotabato to Davao along the foothills of Mt. Apo, with Elizabeth writing about the journey in her diary. Elizabeth’s account of their trip across western Davao provides a comparative account to Guthe’s northeastern journey in 1924. Together these trails captured facets of the province’s landscape and peoples between 1924 and 1931.

The Haydens reached Davao after a six-day journey accompanied by an American Constabulary official, Muslim soldiers, and a group of Bagobo and Manobo cargadores. They undertook the trip by launch, car, and horse from the Rio Grande of Cotabato, across the plains where the towns of Kabacan and Kidapawan were located, around
the foothills of Mt. Apo, and then travelled down to the coastal town of Digos on the Davao Gulf. For their trek around the steep slopes of Mt. Apo on the Davao border, sure-footed horses carried them through a jungle of giant narra trees 100 to 200 feet high with buttressed trunks 20 feet in diameter. As they entered the vicinity of Davao, they frequently encountered small clearings newly planted with corn and rice adjacent to settler houses. The forest was full of activity as it was being turned into an agricultural frontier. Filipino settlers were felling the great narra trees within half an hour, using simple tools, a feat which drew the notice and admiration of Elizabeth.

Map 3.2. Towns traversed by the Haydens in their trek from Cotabato to Davao, 1931.

When passing through the foothills on the Davao side of the frontier, Elizabeth wrote, like Laura Watson Benedict years earlier, that she was the “first white woman” to travel through that part of Mindanao, while admitting that American men had already passed that way before. The foothills were punctuated by “more populous district with houses close to the trail.” Many inhabitants came out to meet them along the way, and when it rained, local women and girls used banana and taro leaves as umbrellas to keep themselves dry. Descending towards the coast, through wooded ravines, cleared lands where monkeys chattered and screamed, and waist-high cogon grass, suddenly, albeit dramatically, “like [the opening of] Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony,” they came upon the magnificent view of Davao Gulf - a “long fringe of sapphire bordered by emerald.”
They spent their first night in Davao in Digos, which bordered Santa Cruz where the Metcalfs and Benedict had stayed a quarter of a century earlier, finding urban comforts in the house of an American, built “in the manner of the Visayans – with large open verandahs.” Rather different from the time of the Metcalfs and Benedict, the Haydens travelled to Davao by car over a road network that connected Digos and Santa Cruz to the main town. In Davao, they stayed with friends they had met on their first transpacific voyage, and dined with other friends from Michigan engaged in business in Davao, ending their trek “in civilized fashion.” Like Guthe seven years earlier, Elizabeth Hayden considered the bustling town of Davao a haven of civilization, after having spent time in the jungles of its interior.

ii. Davao from the air, 1934

In August 1934, Joseph Ralston Hayden would take another trip to Davao, and enjoy the landscape that his wife wrote about, but from a very different vantage point – the air. While it took the Haydens a week to travel from Cotabato to Davao on the ground in 1931, it only took several hours by plane to fly across Davao province three years later. Entering the age of civil aviation, Hayden, now Vice Governor General, participated in an air exercise across Mindanao led by Gen. Frank Parker of the U.S. Army, who was on a mission for the Air Corps to create a system of air routes covering the archipelago. Consequently, this air trip was undertaken by Hayden at the height of negotiations to determine the Davao airport site.

The Parker expedition comprised three airplanes and took four days to fly to various points of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. The fleet of aircraft embarked on the Davao leg on the first day of the expedition, taking off from Del Monte airfield just before 8:00 a.m., and were flying over the vicinity of Davao an hour later. They approached Davao from the northeast, following the Agusan River as it meandered from northern Mindanao to Davao, encompassing the route Guthe took over the Saug River ten years earlier. The three planes flew over immense coastal ranges, forest clearings, and occasional small towns. Hayden took note of “scattered homes” interspersed with descriptions of “a green, treeless valley at the foot of the ranges,” gorgeous panorama of three mountain ridges, a jar-shaped clear lake nestled near white-speckled cliffs, and “another narrow valley” and deep gorge. There were
numerous houses on the ridges, and brown clearings set against a green forest. Finally, following their westward route, the airborne travelers had their first glimpse of the Gulf of Davao, and the island of Samal. They took photographs of Davao port from the air and made their descent at around 10 a.m (Fig. 3.5).

![Fig. 3.5. From the south facing north, a photograph of the main port of Davao, Santa Ana, 1934. Courtesy of the Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection.](image)

After a four-hour stopover at Davao for lunch, their party took off at 2:47 p.m. towards the southwest, passing over Digos. On their ascent, the aviators soared directly above a mangrove-covered coast, with reefs visible under the clear waters, while to the north loomed Mt. Apo. As they gained altitude, the huge expanse of abaca and coconut fields “as far as the eyes can see” lay below them, marking an ecological divide with the forest. Flying west by northwest, patches of partially burned clearings were visible down the valley and forested slopes of Mt. Apo, with occasional Bagobo houses discernible beside the kaingins. In this part of the journey, Hayden was flying over the area where he and his wife had traveled three years earlier. By 3:20 in the afternoon, their air expedition had left Davao far behind and was circling the town of Kabacan on the Cotabato plains, and they made their landing in the town of Cotabato half an hour later.
Map 3.3. Mindanao and Sulu, with sites the Parker air expedition covered in 1934

Davao was only the first leg of their air expedition, and the aviators made several stops in various Mindanao locations in Upi, Lanao, Zamboanga, Jolo, and Dipolog during the next four days. After crisscrossing Mindanao, they island-hopped to the Visayas, then to Bicol, before returning to Manila. Vice Governor General Hayden must have personally appreciated the importance of air travel in aiding colonial administration as he took this first air trip. Aeronautics overcame the tyranny of distance especially for an archipelagic country like the Philippines, and for geo-political reasons, once-remote areas of Mindanao could adhere closer to Manila. Subsequently, the relatively isolated people of Davao got their chance to experience air travel when commercial aviation between Davao and Manila was inaugurated the following year.

In the 1930s, transportation and travel in the Philippines had entered the aviation age, with the Vice Governor General having experienced his first air trip in 1934. Interestingly, some Bagobos from Davao already had their first airplane ride two years earlier. In 1932, when flying was still looked upon by the public as a novelty and with trepidation, three Bagobos from Davao were invited to participate in the Manila
Carnival, upon the suggestion of Sarah Metcalf. During the carnival, to great fanfare, the Bagobos, in their indigenous garb, were taken for a ride over the skies of Manila in a U.S. Army Air Corps plane. After signing a government waiver in case of an accident, and, with parachutes strapped to their bodies, the Bagobos flew as pioneer passengers at the onset of the new era of civil aviation. Government intentions aside, a Davao tribe had publicly conquered the skies, appropriating the newest symbol of progress, the airplane, 28 years after they were depicted as head-hunters at the St. Louis World’s Fair.

![Exchanging a Bagobo headdress for an aviator’s cap and goggles for the Manila Carnival airshow, 1932. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology.](image)

Fig. 3.6. Exchanging a Bagobo headdress for an aviator’s cap and goggles for the Manila Carnival airshow, 1932. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology. ¹⁴⁷

---


⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 47, 57.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 160, 168.
14 Ibid., 168.
20 Quizon, “Two Yankee Women at the St. Louis Fair: The Metcalf Sisters and Their Bagobo Soujourn in Mindanao,” 532.
21 Ibid., 531.
22 Ibid., 529.
24 Quizon, “Two Yankee Women at the St. Louis Fair: The Metcalf Sisters and Their Bagobo Soujourn in Mindanao,” 537.
26 Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, November 23, 1907.”
27 Metcalf, “E. Metcalf to Nellie, June 13, 1906.”
30 Ibid., 4.
33 Burncoat, “Nancy Talks with ‘Miss Sally’ Metcalf and Hears Something New to Her about the Philippine Islands.”
35 Ibid., 547.
36 Ibid., 543.
38 Burncoat, “Nancy Talks with ‘Miss Sally’ Metcalf and Hears Something New to Her about the Philippine Islands.”
Quizon, “Two Yankee Women at the St. Louis Fair: The Metcalf Sisters and Their Bagobo Soujourn in Mindanao,” 538.
Sarah Metcalf and Bagobo Friends, Photograph, 1932, Elizabeth H. and Sarah S. Metcalf Collection, Smithsonian Department of Anthropology.
Burncoat, “Nancy Talks with ‘Miss Sally’ Metcalf and Hears Something New to Her about the Philippine Islands”; Quizon, “Two Yankee Women at the St. Louis Fair: The Metcalf Sisters and Their Bagobo Soujourn in Mindanao,” 549.
Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, November 23, 1907.”
Ibid., 4, 8.
Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, September 5, 1907,” September 5, 1907, 2.
Ibid.
Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, April 7, 1907,” April 7, 1907, 5.
Ibid., 6.
Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, March 10, 1907,” March 10, 1907, 5–9, Cummings Expedition, Field Museum Archives.
Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, November 9, 1907,” November 9, 1907, 3.
Ibid., 8–9.
Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, November 23, 1907.”
Ibid.
George A. Dorsey, “Dorsey to Jones, October 12, 1908,” October 12, 1908.
Cole, “Cole to Dorsey, July 25, 1910.”
Dorsey, “Dorsey to Cummings, September 25, 1906.”
78 Cole, Savage Gentlemen, 213.
79 Ibid., 233–34.
80 Ibid., 241.
81 Ibid., 248–49.
82 Cole, “The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao.”
86 Sullivan, Exemplar of Americanism: The Philippine Career of Dean C. Worcester, 156.
95 Ibid., 31.


112 Ibid.


117 Ibid., 12.

118 Ibid., 4.


120 Ibid.

121 Ibid., 4, 14.

122 Ibid., 18.

123 Ibid., 3,4,10.

124 Ibid., 5.


127 Ibid., 16.


129 Ibid., 16.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid., 6.

133 Ibid., 20.


137 Elizabeth O. Hall Hayden, “Across Mindanao” 1931, 14, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.

138 Ibid., 16.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., 17.

141 Ibid.


143 Joseph Ralston Hayden, “Mindanao and Sulu Notes from First Air Trip” (Handwritten notes, Aboard an airplane, August 1934), 2, Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.

144 Ibid.

145 Joseph Ralston Hayden, Davao, Davao Philippines, Photograph, 1934, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.

146 Hayden, “Mindanao and Sulu Notes from First Air Trip,” 3.

147 Bagobo P.I. from Miss Eliz. & Sarah Metcalf, n.d., Elizabeth H. and Sarah S. Metcalf Collection, Smithsonian Department of Anthropology.
Part II
THE CROP
CHAPTER 4

DAVAO’S PLANTATION ECONOMY:
WHERE ABACA WAS KING AND LABORERS REIGNED SUPREME

1. Plantations in the narrative of progress and development

American colonial administrators were caught between two ideals when it came to the extensive and relatively unsettled lands of the Philippines. The Jeffersonian vision of creating yeoman farmers struggled against the benefits of a burgeoning plantation economy developing across colonial Southeast Asia at that time. These two opposing financial-economic visions converged on the Davao frontier under the banner of “progress and development.” The notion of “progress and development,” adept at adopting itself to frontier history, permeated the initial narrative of Davao. In the early years of settlement and development, plantations, which usually employed indigenous labor, were seen as bearers of civilization. Then by the 1920s, with the influx of migrant settlers, landownership was perceived as the means by which Filipinos could enjoy the wealth of an agricultural economy. During the four-decade period from 1900-1940, tribal peoples, then pioneer settlers and plantations, all played their historic part, by either accident or design, in developing the region and its leading city.

Almost from the beginning of American rule, Davao was known as a plantation district. The availability of vast tracts of undeveloped land enabled abaca and coconut plantations to be rapidly established during the first decade of the century. Plantations then became the norm in the following decades. The creation of a monocrop economy encouraged the idea among Davao settlers that plantations brought progress and civilization to a land that was considered still largely “wild.” So ingrained was this perceived connection between economic development and civilizing the “wilderness” that a group of American and Spanish plantation owners in 1909 wrote, \(^1\) “the story of

---

\(^1\) It was an audacious statement. A year before, Association members cultivated only a little over twenty percent of the total 11,688,145 hills of abaca, while nearly eighty percent, was produced on the farms and plantations of indigenous peoples, Christian Filipinos, Japanese, and other foreigners. (Tasker H. Bliss, “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province, 1908,” Report of the Philippine Commission, 1909, 367.)
the Davao Planters Association reads like a chapter in President Roosevelt’s ‘Winning of the West,’” with respect to their contribution to “real progress” in Davao.¹

In regard to civilizing the “wild tribes” of the Davao Gulf region, the colonial administrators viewed plantations as a means to an end. Echoing the Spanish Catholic missionaries who came before him, Governor Tasker Bliss in 1906 hoped that planting abaca would make the indigenous tribal people a settled populace.² Bliss’ hope became a partial reality by 1911, when his successor, Governor Pershing, reported that the Bagobos were selling 1,500 piculs of hemp a month from their permanent settlements.³ Similarly, Leonard Wood, as Governor General of the Philippines, noted during one of his Davao inspection trips in 1925, that the Tagacaolos, “instead of [being] laborers,” were planting abaca in their own farms in the hills, and employing labor from the Visayas.⁴ From this perspective, economic progress and development did come to the various tribes, if it was measured in terms of becoming productive planters.

As part of a national policy in the 1920s, the Bureau of Insular Affairs in Washington encouraged more land leases for plantations in the Philippines because they assisted the country’s economic development.⁵ Correspondingly, governors general, from William Cameron Forbes to Henry Stimson, shared the same view regarding the need for foreign investment to develop the Philippines, as the colony was land-rich but capital-poor.⁶ They were well aware, like Governor General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., that “wealth may be greater where the land is divided into large holdings.”⁷ But these colonial administrators were also equally aware that “the wealth of the average citizen in a community of small farms is greater.”⁸ Small individual holdings were in fact, the legal backbone of Philippine land laws, and herein lay the contradiction between the colonial vision and the enactment of land laws that the multi-national Davao population experienced during its formative decades in the first part of the twentieth century.

2. Davao public land applications

In Davao, the idea of small holdings was difficult to accept as colonial administrators and settlers were confronted with a vast raw land. In a place where the necessity of establishing plantations and the production of export crops acquired a
sense of urgency, land became valuable when it was used to grow crops, with abaca being the preferred export commodity. Consequently, the acquisition of land in order to plant this commodity was a crucial first step in the establishment of plantations.

Thus, when the public land laws\(^8\) were enacted in the Philippines, Davao settlers were among the earliest to apply for large tracts of public lands. In a 1910 national report listing all persons in the Philippines having lease applications for more than sixteen hectares, Davao settlers comprised more than a fifth of the people on the list.\(^9\) In another report for the same year, Davao had the largest number of plantations in the Moro Province, covering three-fifths of the total.\(^10\) Equally noteworthy were the actions of Davao tribes registering their landholdings to the satisfaction of government officials who attested that “it was plainly evident that they considered it a privilege to be known as land owners and tax payers.”\(^11\)

Davao, comprising more than 2 million hectares of public domain, ranked first among Philippine provinces in terms of public land lease applications with the Bureau of Lands during the American era. Davao accounted for 993 lease applications received from 1904 to 1932, constituting a total of 367,840 hectares. Sales and homestead applications of Davao public lands were ranked third and fourth respectively, among Philippine provinces in the same period.\(^12\) The approval rate vis-à-vis applications received was 42 percent for homesteads, 9 percent for sales, and 7 percent for leases in Davao. These figures were high considering that the corresponding national figures were 32 percent for homesteads, 9 percent (the same) for sales, and 4 percent for leases. The relatively high percentage of applications awarded to Davao residents is

\(^8\) The Public Land Law of 1903 allowed any individual to apply for a homestead of up to sixteen hectares of land, later amended in 1919 to twenty-four hectares, as long as the applicant complied with the requirements of citizenship, age, and familial position (“Primer Containing Questions and Answers on the Public Land Laws in Force in the Philippine Islands, Issued February 26, 1906” (Bureau of Printing, 1906), 7.) People could own the land they had occupied and cultivated prior to the American occupation through free patents; while public lands up to sixteen hectares in 1903, and enlarged to 100 hectares after 1919, and 144 hectares after 1924, could be owned through purchase (Karl J. Pelzer, Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics: Studies in Land Utilization and Agricultural Colonization in Southeastern Asia (New York: American Geographical Society of New York, 1945), 107. The 1903 law allowed corporations to buy the maximum of 1,024 hectares as long as they were incorporated in the Philippines. However, the amended land law of 1919 only allowed corporations to purchase or lease land if their capital stock was composed of at least sixty-one percent Filipino or American ownership (Philippine Legislature, To Amend and Compile the Laws Relative to Lands of the Public Domain, and for Other Purposes, vol. 2874, 1919, http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/acts/act_2874_1919.html). For leaseholds, the law allowed the maximum limit of 1,024 hectares for both individuals and corporations, and allowed the leaseholder to employ others to cultivate the land and live on it (“Primer Containing Questions and Answers on the Public Land Laws in Force in the Philippine Islands, Issued February 26, 1906,” 14.).
significant considering that the majority of the applications received were often rejected by the Bureau of Lands for reasons which will be explained later in this chapter.  

Despite the high percentage of rejected land applications, Davao residents applied for and acquired land at a more rapid rate than the national average. By year-end 1933, there were 114,296 hectares of Davao lands approved and awarded for homestead, purchase and lease. Most of these went to Filipinos, while a number were also taken up by Americans and Japanese. The bullish atmosphere surrounding Davao’s economy can best be seen through the number of corporations that were formed, and the increasing participation of Filipinos in these ventures. In 1917, when the Japanese plantation corporations in Davao were being praised as models for abaca and coconuts development because of their “progressive and modern methods applied to agriculture,” there were already 69 corporations engaged in plantation agriculture. This figure rapidly increased to 127 plantations by 1918, of which 82 were Japanese, 20 American, and 19 Filipino. By 1930, with the amended 1919 Public Land Act in effect, prohibiting Japanese corporations or individuals from owning land after 1919, Filipino plantations became the most numerous in Davao numbering 106, followed by 62 Japanese, 24 American, 13 Chinese, and 1 Spanish.

In a 1938 survey of 457 associations and corporations in Davao, including those not engaged in agriculture, Filipinos represented 90 companies, almost the same number as the Japanese who were counted at 91, while the Americans represented 147 businesses. The landholdings of these Davao corporations and associations tallied 34,035 hectares, with Japanese corporations having the largest share at 14,397 hectares, followed by the American corporations with 11,649 hectares, and the Filipino companies numbering 3,741 hectares. However, corporations did not totally dominate Davao landholding patterns, as personal ownership of property drew the largest numbers with 23,552 listed individual property holders. They had a combined total of 240,825 hectares assessed at ₱21,342,090. Filipinos accounted for the greatest number of landholders, with 22,944 individuals owning 227,253 hectares valued at ₱18,916,800.
The preponderance of Davao corporations and individuals engaged in plantation and small-holder agriculture partly explains why Davao had 71 percent of the national total for lease applications, with 383 registered out of the national total of 540 from 1906 to 1918. Davao, with 12,164 hectares of leased lands granted, also comprised 68 percent of the entire country’s 17,901 hectares leased from 1906 to 1918. By the same token, between 1906 and 1932, the Bureau of Lands received the following total area of public land applications for Davao:

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Application</th>
<th>Area (Hectares)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homestead</td>
<td>195,371</td>
<td>29.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>88,289</td>
<td>13.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leasehold</td>
<td>367,840</td>
<td>56.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>651,500</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the 1939 Census, Filipinos and Americans operated a combined total of 284,913 hectares (277,288 and 7,625 hectares respectively) or 87 percent of the total agricultural land in Davao Province. The Japanese were reported to have 41,324 hectares under their operation, or 13 percent of the total agricultural area in Davao. The 1939 Census figures showed that in terms of sheer numbers alone, there were far more Filipinos than Japanese engaged in agriculture in Davao. In all the farms listed in the Census, there were 25,158 Filipino farmers and managers compared with 3,147 Japanese. Even in the abaca farms which the Japanese were said to dominate, there were still more Filipinos holding managerial or ownership status at 13,252, compared with the 3,028 listed Japanese. Significantly, there were only 3,246 Japanese farm laborers while Filipinos numbered 56,948. These figures show that Filipinos outnumbered the Japanese in agricultural endeavors as evidenced by increased Filipino ownership and entrepreneurship in the province by the late 1930s.

Adding the Department of Agriculture’s alleged 29,252 hectares of Japanese-controlled lands under the names of Filipinos and Americans to the 41,324 hectares reported by the 1939 Census as officially under Japanese hands, total Japanese lands go up to 70,576 hectares (21.6 % only) of the total agricultural lands in Davao. Filipino/American lands still accounted for a clear majority of almost 78%.
3. The land laws, the bureaucracy and the land applicant

Davao public land applications and their related economic ventures increased over the decades, despite difficulties engendered by the Philippine land laws and the colonial bureaucracy. There were three major obstacles that had to be overcome by applicants in Davao. The first centered on the limited land size legislated by American policymakers in 1902 on behalf of Filipino small-holders and domestic American agricultural interests. The second factor was a foreign prohibition on landownership, put in place when Filipinos gained control over legislation in 1916. The third hurdle concerned the implementation of the land laws under the mandate of the Bureau of Lands.

a. The limit on size

From the moment of annexation of the archipelago, American policymakers considered agricultural public land to be the Philippines’ greatest asset. 21 Many believed the best way to develop the colony was to distribute public lands to the largest number of Filipinos possible. Consequently, colonial land distribution delivered the homestead system, which helped settle the American West and was still active at the time of the American annexation of the Philippines. The homestead ideal guided the thinking of American congressmen when discussing general land policy for the Philippines to such an extent that Secretary of War Elihu Root had to inform them that the Philippines was “a country that has been settled for more than three hundred years,” and therefore must have a modified homestead law. 22

Elihu Root, in 1902, was perhaps the most informed authority in the United States in regard to the state of the Philippines, as his office was in-charge of the new insular possessions of the United States. Although he believed in giving land to as many people as possible, Root was also equally aware of the economic importance of establishing large plantations that used modern methods of agriculture in order to improve an “enormous amount” of land that had “gone unused for over three centuries.” 23 He raised the idea of cultivating abaca, tobacco, sugar, rice and rubber in these yet undeveloped wilderness areas.

However, a man-on-the-spot testimony from Gen. Arthur McArthur, who was in-charge of the U.S. Army in the Philippines headquartered in Manila, discouraged selling public lands in large blocks. He reported that Filipinos were apprehensive about
such developments, fearing exploitation along Spanish lines. MacArthur’s opinion accorded well with the interests of American sugar and tobacco trusts that feared the competition that cheap Filipino labor could bring against their businesses. The Anti-Imperialist League, which fought against the entrenchment of American capital in the Philippines, also bolstered support for limited landholdings.  

Thus, when the U.S. Congress passed the Organic Act of the Philippines on July 1, 1902, public land applications were limited to only 16 hectares for an individual and 1,024 hectares for a corporation. The Philippine Commission, the governing body in the Philippines, however, recommended almost immediately, an increased limit of 10,000 hectares for lands to be sold or leased. But the U.S. Congress remained adamant on the matter, and the Philippine Commission had no choice but to enact the Public Land Law of 1903 according to the prescribed limits. The Philippine Commission would continually reiterate its request for a more liberal land policy in the ensuing decades, but to no avail.

The Philippine Commission was not alone in urging for larger tracts of public land to be made available. In 1904, Gen. Leonard Wood as Moro Province Governor, had recommended that the homestead clause be increased five-fold, to at least 80 hectares. Moreover, Wood pushed for corporations to be granted at least 4,000 hectares for “development of a large scale” in the Moro Province. The Davao Planters Association also presented a recommendation for more liberal land laws to the Moro Province Legislative Council in 1905. However, beginning 1907, the political ascendance of Manila-based politicians in the Philippine Legislature ensured the maintenance of the prescribed land limits, in its aim to protect the national patrimony.

When Leonard Wood assumed the governor generalship of the colony in the 1920s, there was a concerted effort to bring the Philippine land law debate to Washington, especially after the passage of the restrictive 1919 Public Land Act. Bureau of Insular Affairs chief Gen. Frank McIntyre shared Wood’s view that opening up Philippine public lands was a sure means to economic development, and pushed for larger tracts to be granted to corporations. But, American domestic agricultural interests, aligned with the sentiments of Philippine lawmakers, maintained the
stringent corporation limits. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, with the welfare of American farmers on his mind, stopped any further efforts by Wood and McIntyre to lobby in the metropole for a change in the Philippine land laws.\textsuperscript{32}

The Public Land Act of 1919 ensured that corporations which had the capacity to develop large tracts of land, were limited solely to 1,024 hectares. The Act allowed homestead lots an increase to 24 hectares, and a further amendment in 1924 allowed individual public land purchase up to 144 hectares. The small increases in the size of individual landholdings still made it difficult to obtain economies of scale that larger tracts provided. However, the constraining land law did not stop people in Davao from developing both small and large land allotments in the period under consideration.

b. The limit on foreign ownership

While the effort to maintain land limits had the support of domestic American agricultural interests, the limit on foreign ownership was undertaken almost singlehandedly by the Filipino legislature. The powerful weapon they wielded was a nationalist sentiment that neutralized any pro-American or pro-foreign argument from the onset. Philippine lawmakers reasoned that it was their responsibility to preserve the natural resources of the country, especially its public lands. When Filipinos gained full control\textsuperscript{10} of the legislature in 1916, efforts towards nationalizing the land laws started immediately.

By January 1917, the Philippine legislature had already sent Washington a proposed bill revising the land laws to exclude all foreign corporations except Americans from holding title to land.\textsuperscript{33} Manila considered the matter as “one of growing importance and a source of considerable uneasiness” because of the acquisition of large tracts of land by the Japanese in Davao.\textsuperscript{34} The Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA) however felt frustrated that “a timid spirit [was] being cultivated in the people by encouraging the apprehension [over] the Japanese agricultural invasion.” The Japanese, according to the BIA, had been “developing a wholly undeveloped district in Davao,” anyway.\textsuperscript{35} Furthermore, the BIA added that the act would create

\textsuperscript{10} In August 1916, the Jones Law became the fundamental law of the Philippines. It created an all-Filipino legislative branch of government, replacing the set-up that was began in 1907 whereby an American-dominated upper House and a Filipino lower house shared law making powers. By October 1916, Filipino politicians were voted by an elite minority of their countrymen into a two-house Congress, namely the Senate and the House of Representatives.
unnecessary grievance not only among the Japanese, but also from Spanish, Chinese and other foreign landowners in the Philippines.

When the Philippine Legislature passed the proposal as House Bill 1124 in February, as predicted, the embassies of Japan and Spain sent their official objections to the U.S. Department of State. It created an awkward foreign relations position for the United States since the First World War was still raging, and Japan was an American ally. Consequently, the Secretary of State argued that certain provisions in the proposed bill violated treaties with both countries, and recommended disapproval, “in view of the existing status of international affairs, to avert any controversy... particularly with Japan.” Thus, the proposed bill was withdrawn from the U.S. President’s consideration.

The Philippine Legislature continued to press for foreign land limits though, and passed Act. No. 2874 the following year. Certain sections were revised, and a reciprocity clause was added which allowed foreigners to acquire public lands if the laws of their countries enabled Filipinos to do the same. The Act qualified corporate restrictions by allowing companies with not more than 39 percent foreign ownership to lease and purchase public lands. Approved by the U.S. President in November 1919, it came to be known as the aforementioned Public Land Act of 1919, imposing limits on size and foreign ownership. After further lobbying by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Washington and Manila, two other laws, Acts 2921 and 2975, were passed by the Philippine Legislature in 1920 and 1921 respectively, to allow 34 existing leases of Japanese corporations in Davao to be maintained.

c. Contending with bureaucracy

The passage of the amended land laws coincided with the increased migration of Filipinos to Davao in the 1920s. The migration was a direct consequence of the growth of the Davao economy created by the plantations which, ironically, the public land laws were attempting to constrain. The plantation economy created a demand for services, not only for laborers, but also for government employees, schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, and shop-keepers, resulting to increased Filipino migration to Davao. Eventually, these migrants applied for their own pieces of land in Davao, and negotiated the complex process of applying for a title deed from the Bureau of Lands.
On paper, the mandate of the Bureau of Lands was to aid in the economic development of the country through its control and allocation of unused public lands for productive agricultural purposes. In reality however, the Bureau was almost always overworked and understaffed, and failed to adequately uphold its mandate. In 1921, Acting Director C. Carballo reported that the “vexatious problem of the lack of personnel” mentioned in previous annual reports, had reached a climax when the number of applications, claims, and conflicts received surpassed all previous record, while the number of personnel fell dramatically due to low salaries. This unfortunate conjuncture resulted in the suspension of Bureau work in Davao for almost six months, when its 12 inspectors were re-assigned to investigate cases in Nueva Ecija. The general public had such a low opinion of the Bureau by the 1920s, that when regional offices were opened in 1926, the Bureau specifically aimed to restore confidence and “firmly establish in the hearts of the people the belief that the Bureau of Lands offices exist[ed] to aid in the economic development of the country.”

i. **The application system**

There were many reasons why the Filipino people did not have confidence in the Bureau of Lands. Firstly, the application system itself was problematic. There was inordinate red tape involved in applying for land, which contributed to undue delays, compounding the already complicated process. The procedure was so byzantine that it required 18 steps, passing through the Bureau of Lands, the Clerk of Court, the Court of First Instance, the General Land Registration Office and the Provincial Registrar, not to mention the applicant’s dealings with the surveyor, the newspapers for publication, and lawyers (Table 4.2). It ordinarily took more than two years for the whole procedure, if the case did not encounter any problems. In this lengthy course of action, it was not uncommon for the government to lose crucial papers. In a certain case, for example, the Bureau misplaced the application of Alejandra Navarro, a Guianga sales applicant, admitting that they had searched for the papers for five months, but could not find them. The lawyers acting on behalf of the applicant had to wait for more than a year for any information on the case.

---

8 In this section, the Bureau of Lands will also be referred to as “the Bureau.”
The tedious nature of the process encouraged corruption. Many applicants were tempted to cut short the necessary steps and pay-off a government official. In one instance, the Bureau of Lands was amenable to payment of ₱50,000 from the applicant in order to get title to the land.\textsuperscript{44} Another case involved an official of the Bureau of Forestry who used his influence to have land claimants employ a private surveyor, rather than wait for the Bureau of Lands survey, and received a 5\% commission for acting as the surveyor’s agent.\textsuperscript{45}

The law acknowledged the complex and lengthy process of a land application, and so it included a provision that allowed for applicants to occupy and develop their land prior to survey, as long as the parcel of land had been applied for by the prospective owner and the application received by the Bureau of Lands. However, this provision gave rise to numerous claims and conflicts, entailing even more work for the
Bureau which resulted in further unnecessary expense and delay for the applicant.46 One Davao sales applicant went to court when he was blocked by the Bureau of Lands three years after he began clearing and planting abaca on his land in Malagos, because his land was subject to contested claims from three homestead applicants.47 Numerous similar cases made the Bureau abandon this provision by the mid-1930s.48

The slow process of surveying the land was due to the lack of funds provided to the Bureau by the insular government. As early as 1915, the Governor of Mindanao and Sulu noted the need for more appropriations on behalf of the Bureau since the limited number of personnel accomplished little in terms of geodetic surveys, which slowed down the overall development of agriculture.49 Beside the lack of government funding, the Department of Agriculture and Commerce blamed the slow pace of surveys on the small number of qualified surveyors, the high cost of isolated surveys, and the people’s unwillingness to have their lands properly surveyed.50

The Bureau had established nine cadastral survey projects throughout Davao in the 1930s to encourage the settlement of Filipinos in the province.51 However, settlers often beat government surveyors to the land, and began squatting and cultivation before the Bureau could subdivide the area.52 In many cases, these untitled lands were located within forest reserves, and thus taken away from the erstwhile applicants, which prompted those affected to accuse the government of backtracking on its public declarations of encouraging people to “go south” and apply for land.53 Cadastral surveys also tended to be abused by newcomers who made official paper filings with the Bureau of Lands ahead of those who sometimes occupied the land first, especially since the Bureau tended to “give priority to the one whose application reached the office first,” rather than the “one who showed prior occupancy.”54

The complications brought about by such bureaucratic inefficiencies caused unnecessary friction among applicants. Such was the circumstance in the case of a Santa Cruz lease that was taken over by the widow of the applicant who bought the rights to the land from a previous occupant. During the time between publication and approval of the lease contract in Manila, a local official of the Bureau mistakenly encouraged at least five persons to apply for homesteads on portions of the widow’s

---

5 Cadastral surveys were suited in extensive areas such as Davao, where large areas are surveyed as a whole, then subdivided into lots for general registration proceedings.
land. After several months of arguing their cases before the Bureau, a decision to cancel the homesteads was ordered, but not before one rejected homestead applicant implied that the “rich, powerful and influential” had grabbed his “very small piece of land.”

Poorly-informed land applicants added to the application problems and process. The Director of Lands complained that many applicants were under the impression that simply filing an application was sufficient evidence for them to work the land, but not necessarily comply with any other requirements. Others did not know or heed the importance of the requirement of placing posts or signs at corners of their property to demarcate their homesteads. Hence, conflicting boundary claims were common. In cases of conflict, the applications of those who merely cut trails and placed signboards on their property but failed to maintain them, were rejected in favor of those who continuously cultivated the land.

Many applicants hired lawyers in Manila and Davao to process their applications. But even the lawyers encountered major problems with the process, mainly because they were given conflicting information. As a Manila lawyer wrote by way of apology to his Davao counterpart:

> I had to go to the Bureau of Land Registration and had a meeting with its Director, Altavas. I was so disturbed by the “red tape” since I was told one thing this day, and tomorrow another. So finally I saw [Bureau of Lands] Director Vargas, and then Altavas. This is the reason why in my letters I was saying various things. After each time I went to the Bureau of Lands, I wrote you to record my efforts, taking into account the interest you had on the issue based on your letters. Today, I have protested against the dilatory procedure of the Office on many issues that I have pending, and Director Vargas has somewhat confessed to me that the defect is in the “record system,” and this is due to the lack of staff in the Archives Division.

ii. Other factors

While the majority of the problems originated from systemic flaws in the process itself, the law also placed undue power in the hands of the Director of Lands with regard to interpreting the “letter and spirit” of the Public Lands Act. This discretion

---

G Author’s translation from the original Spanish, italics as emphasis by the author.

H In 1931, the Director of Lands delegated his decision-making powers to a specially-created Special Agent for Mindanao due to the volume of work in Mindanao land applications. By 1935, however, under a different Director, the position was abolished after the Bureau was reorganized. (Serafin P. Hilado, “Reorganization of Mindanao Units and Establishment of the Office of the Special Agent for Mindanao,” 18 Administrative Order § Official Gazette (1931); Simeon Ramos, “Annual Report of the Director of
was criticized by some as an “arbitrary power” of the Bureau Chief to reject or cancel applications, which resulted in the Bureau preventing persons or corporations from settling on and developing public lands.\textsuperscript{59} Commenting on a Bureau order for a retrospective re-investigation of a case when a decision by the previous Director had already been given three years prior, a Davao applicant’s lawyer argued that such a proceeding is “illegal, expensive and above all dangerous for it led the public to believe that orders and decisions promulgated by the Bureau are without authority and effect.”\textsuperscript{60}

Other government agencies involved in land settlement claims also contributed to the problem of bureaucratic red tape. There was a lack of coordination between the Bureau of Lands, in charge of pinpointing surveyed lands for settlement, and the Bureau of Labor, responsible for sending prospective settlers from their province of origin to the frontier. While Lands issued the directive of sending applicants “only to approved points of destination,” Labor was said to “always recommend exceptions” to these destinations for various reasons. This lack of administrative coordination resulted in some homesteaders who could not “find vacant agricultural public lands available for immediate occupation.”\textsuperscript{61}

Finally, the great distance of Davao from the Bureau’s central office caused further difficulties in contending with the Manila bureaucracy. In one case a Davao homestead applicant asked for a reinvestigation of his case before the Bureau because additional evidence could not be presented due to the difficulty of communication between Manila and Davao at certain times of the year.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, decisions were very slow, and the costs higher due to the expenses on letters and telegrams sent between the capital and the province.

4. A dearth of capital and labor

a. Financial constraints

The problems presented by the land laws and the Bureau organization compounded the already difficult situation of a land applicant, who not only had to undertake the process of applying for a title, but also had to make do with limited funding. The longer the application process took, the more expensive it became. For

\footnote{Lands, January 1 to November 14, 1935,” Annual Report (Manila: Bureau of Lands, Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 1936), 8, RG 350, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)}
migrants who applied for land, only those determined enough and with additional money to spare were able to obtain their title deed. The unexpected delays in the process often meant that funds allocated for the development of farms and plantations had to be diverted for legal fees.

As bank credit was scarce for such purposes, many Davao applicants sourced money through less-formal means. Several American plantations were informal partnerships, whereby absentee Manila partners contributed to a monthly fund to finance a representative in Davao who took charge of the plantation. Some Filipino applicants relied upon investments pooled from family members, not necessarily in Davao, while others funded applications from their own savings or retirement pay.

Money was scarce and financial survival precarious after 1918, not only because of the strict limits imposed by the Bureau procedure and the government laws, but also because of the vagaries of the world market price of abaca. When abaca prices collapsed at the end of the First World War, and during the Great Depression of the early 1930s, many plantations teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. A prime casualty of the first crisis was Alexander McClellan, Manager of the Gulf Plantation at Pantucan. He was shot and killed in 1919 by his business partner and plantation President, E.W. Ames, over plantation management troubles and its heavy debts to the Philippine National Bank (PNB). On another plantation, its destitute manager subsisted on “wild game and camotes” during those hard times. The Great Depression led one landholder to give abaca plants to laborers as a form of common purpose currency and payment in order to save the plantation from ruin, while another planter became indebted to various laborers for an aggregate sum of ten thousand pesos.

Paradoxically, the commercial role of the only bank in Davao, the PNB, tended to stifle local enterprise, rather than support it. Its qualifications were too strict for most ordinary Davao residents since it only provided loans to those with patented titles to their land. But even for those who did qualify, its terms were often too draconian, and many became cautionary victims when their properties were foreclosed. The old seemingly successful pioneer Juan Awad lost everything to the bank in 1927, including his building, then the tallest structure on main street. This was such extraordinary news in Davao at the time, that the phrase “hapay na si Awad” (Awad is bankrupt)
entered common parlance. People have since used the expression whenever they meant they did not have money, as a Davao resident recounted:

When someone asked, "May pera ka?" [Do you have any money?] instinctively they would answer, "wala, hapay na si Awad" (meaning, I’m broke). A sabungero [cockfighter] who lost his last money in a bet in the sabungan [cockpit] likewise sighed, "haaahhayyy! Hapay na si Awad."

b. Scarcity of labor

Yet another major problem confronting a land applicant on the Davao frontier was the scarcity of skilled labor. The early plantations utilized indigenous populations, but many were "not always conveniently located, nor [were] they always anxious to work." In 1906, the changes brought about by the tribal ward system and plantation labor-related abuses generated a Gulf-wide millennial craze, called the "Dance of Labi." The movement aimed to unite the tribal groups in order to "kill all American planters and officials and all the Filipinos," and install a new government under an indigenous king. In his efforts to clamp down on the movement, Governor Bolton and a planter were killed by Mangulayon, a Manobo deputy headman of the Tagacaolo tribal ward. After the killing, Mangulayon was reported to have said, "now [I] could feel like a man again."

After this tragic incident, governors of the Moro Province insisted upon good labor relations in the plantations. Governor Bliss lamented that he did not want future historians to think that the American people had travelled half-way around the earth to commit injustice. Albeit, he was still convinced that enterprise – agriculture, manufacturing and commerce – was key to morally uplifting and civilizing the tribes. Governor Pershing specifically required planters to "offer wages, shelter and medical

---

1 Some locals shunned manual work as something that did not befit them, as an American pastor Robert Black, wrote in 1905: "At one time I needed a few laborers and went out to one of the poorer quarters of the town, hoping to find some. Seeing a group of men idly smoking cigarettes, I approached and said I would like to get some workmen for a few days. They gazed upon me with sympathetic interest. One of them, slowly taking out his cigarette said in an almost injured tone, "We have no workmen ourselves." I doubt if there was a dollar in the group... Call one of them a "man" and you insult him. You must call him lord ("Senior")." (Robert Franklin Black, "OTao Po: A Salutation from Mindanao" (Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands, August 1905), 7, Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.)

2 The method for plantation managers to have direct control of labor supply during the first decade of American occupation was to make arrangements with the government in building a tribal village of sufficient size to accommodate all the laborers together with their families. Through the tribal ward system, upland tribes were then ordered to come down to live in these villages, and work in the plantations. (H.T. Edwards and M.M. Saleeby, "Abaca (Manila Hemp)," Department of the Interior, Bureau of Agriculture, Farmer’s Bulletin, 1910, 22.)
Planters thus advanced fares for passage and initial wages to contracted workers. A planter’s fear of losing the advance in case a newly-arrived worker walked off, gave laborers some form of bargaining power to ask for additional tools and work clothes from their employer.76

However, this initial colonial endeavor of contracting laborers for Davao plantations produced only limited numbers of people who did not necessarily work well.77 Even the early Japanese arrivals, contracted privately, were a “great disappointment to the planters” as they were not anxious to work, and were “rather restless and undesirable elements in the community.” 78 Low pay and the use of checks and credit slips instead of cash were major reasons for the poor performance in those early days.79 Thus, a 1910 government primer advised that

the most difficult problem which the tropical planter has to face, and that which more than any other one thing will determine his ultimate success or failure, is the manner in which he controls and directs his labor. To have available at all time as many workmen as can be used to advantage, and to so handle them as to secure the best results, requires a thorough knowledge of the native character and an infinite amount of tact and patience.80

Having learned their initial lessons, and buoyed by the good prices for abaca during the First World War, plantations began to offer better deals to laborers, and the government was also keen to lend its support by crafting a system based on Pershing’s earlier recommendations and requirements. Observing that Filipino laborers on government public works were abandoning their employment to work in the plantations which offered pay as high as ₱70 a month stripping abaca, Governor Frank Carpenter began to allow such transfers.81 The government-recruited laborer was given the privilege of cancelling his contract “if he has entered into a new contract with a private planter, under labor conditions approved by the government.” Furthermore, these conditions were “embodied in a printed contract form which gave due guaranties to the planter and protection to the laborer.”82

This private-public cooperation in securing a steady supply of laborers for Davao plantations was a significant development not only in the history of Philippine labor migration, but also in the nature of labor arrangements that became unique to Davao. Written contracts made laborers more aware of their rights, and enabled them to
voice their complaints, and in at least one case, emboldened the laborers to press charges against their abusive plantation manager.\textsuperscript{83} This government-sponsored contractual arrangement established the fact that in Davao, laborers rights had to be recognized and they reigned supreme.

The immediate response to this scheme was favorable, as the number of interested migrant laborers exceeded available space in the government cutters and commercial vessels bound for Davao. In 1917, there were 5,076 people transported by the government under the auspices of this scheme, and many more took passage on commercial vessels, while “considerable numbers of families” impatiently awaited their turn at various points in the Visayas.\textsuperscript{84} These new Filipino arrivals coincided with those of the Japanese, whom Acting Governor Teofisto Guingona reported in 1918 as “insistently, though silently, penetrating into Davao.”\textsuperscript{85}

The early batches of Japanese migrants fluctuated, dependent upon the price of abaca. Many left just after the end of the First World War, due to low abaca prices. But as abaca prices improved by 1925, their numbers went back up to around 5,000 in Davao.\textsuperscript{86} The number of Filipino migrants also steadily increased over the next decade, drawn to the jobs, good wages,\textsuperscript{87} and public land options available in Davao.\textsuperscript{87} Census reports show a steady increase in the Filipino population from 65,000 mostly indigenous peoples in 1903, to 102,221 in 1918 with near equal distribution between “Christian” and “Non-Christians.” By the 1939 Census, an estimated 164,000 settler Filipinos had surpassed the population of 110,000 indigenous peoples, 18,000 Japanese, and a mix of some 300 Americans, Europeans and Asians, making Davao a multi-cultural yet pre-dominantly settler-Filipino province.\textsuperscript{1}

5. The pakyaw

Given the difficult land laws and bureaucracy, lack of funds and labor on the frontier, the stakeholders in Davao’s plantation economy developed a pragmatic

\textsuperscript{83} One scholar noted that skilled Filipino workers in Davao were “relatively overpaid,” with daily wages reaching ₱2.50 compared to Manila’s ₱1.20 on the eve of the Second World War. (Serafin Quiason, “The Japanese Colony in Davao, 1904-1941,” Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review 23, no. 2–4 (1958): 223.)

\textsuperscript{84} Since the 1939 Census does not have the classification of Christians and Non-Christians, which the past two census used, an approximate figure was made based on the religion of the peoples of Davao. There were 163,742 people who professed to be Catholics, Aglipayan or Protestants, compared to 109,629 people who were Non-religious (94,089) or Muslims (15,540).
arrangement to overcome these hurdles, called “pakyaw” by many. A Sino-Philippine term, pakyaw is still used in the Philippines today to mean “wholesale.” On Davao plantations in the first half of the twentieth century, pakyaw contracts referred to the profit-sharing arrangement between landholders and laborers based on the proceeds of particular abaca harvests. Similar to sharecropping arrangements found in Europe, the Americas, China and Africa in different time periods, profit-sharing of harvests had been widely practiced in other parts of the Philippines, from the rice-growing regions of Luzon, to the Manobo general stores of Agusan. The latter experiment inspired Governor Carpenter to adopt similar arrangements in the Cotabato colonies in the mid-1910s. By the 1930s, the pakyaw contract had become the common standard not only for labor arrangements on Davao plantations, but also for other manual jobs such as public works in other parts of Mindanao.

In Davao, the details of pakyaw contracts varied from plantation to plantation, depending on the specific circumstances of every landholder and laborers. Such arrangements were flexible, and provided sufficient leeway to fit the particular needs of both contracting parties. A pakyaw contract depended on a particular set of circumstances, including whether the land was still forested or not, whether the landholder had enough cash to pay for equipment, and whether the laborers wished to be paid based on a shared percentage, in cash or in kind, either before or after the abaca was sold. The following cases are just three examples of the many variations on the pakyaw arrangement:

The first example involves a Japanese corporation and a Filipino applicant whose land applications overlapped. The two parties negotiated on the sharing of the 8,000 hills of abaca planted by the corporation, which, upon survey, was found to be on the Filipino’s land. The Japanese corporation renounced its rights to the land, but in

---


N One such pakyaw job involved the construction of the Provincial Commander’s quarters in Cotabato. The workers agreed to furnish all necessary labor and materials in constructing the office of the PC commander for an agreed sum. (D. Gutierrez and A. Espinosa, “Pacquiao Contract,” December 21, 1934.)
consideration of its rights to the abaca planted, became a sharecropper with the Filipino, and continued the maintenance and harvesting of the abaca for 15 years, receiving ninety percent of the harvest during that period. The Filipino landowner received ten percent of the abaca share during that same period, as well as all the improvements to his land at the end of the 15-year contract.89

The second example is a 15-year Contract of Personal Services between a Filipino landholder and a Japanese laborer for the cultivation and stripping of 3,500 hills of abaca located on four hectares of the Filipino’s seven-hectare land. The Japanese was to take care of the abaca at his own expense, and replant any that may have perished. In return, the Filipino landholder agreed to pay the Japanese laborer 85 percent of all the abaca stripped, and retain for himself the remaining 15 percent. At the end of 15 years, the Japanese agreed to deliver to the Filipino owner all the improvements existing on his land without any right to ask for indemnity.90

The third contract was between a Bagoba free patent holder and a Japanese laborer. Their profit sharing was based on specific jobs that the laborer performed in the production of abaca on her land. Since the landholder did not have the ₱1,400 capital to start a plantation of 2,000 hills of abaca, the laborer agreed to administer the plantation and invest the initial capital in exchange for 15 percent of the proceeds. The rest of the proceeds went to pay for stripping and tumbling (50%), weeding and payment of taxes (15%), machine rental (10%), while the remaining balance of 10% went to the landholder or to her heirs.91

The pakyaw, as it developed in Davao, was a logical progression from the early written labor contracts, which was adapted to frontier conditions. The new arrangement was a way of adjusting to land laws that limited the size of holdings by enabling several individuals to take charge of a parcel of land, usually 10 hectares in size, but it also could be as small as several hectares.92 The pakyaw also enabled foreigners, mostly Japanese, to cultivate abaca as laborers without having to apply for or own land. By the 1920s, the reputation of the Japanese as hardworking, efficient and honest workers was widely known in Davao, and there was a growing demand for Japanese laborers among planters and landholders then. Despite the premium placed on Japanese labor, Filipinos were still the most numerous group of plantation workers,
and were highly regarded as abaca strippers. Many landholders often employed a Japanese foreman to oversee Filipino and Japanese laborers.

The particularities of the cash flow of an abaca plantation and the cash-poor position of a typical landholder were factors that shaped *pakyaw* contracts. At the start, plantations required a large outlay of funds to clear forested lands, build laborers quarters, and plant abaca seedlings, but it earned no money until the third year, when the abaca matured. In the meantime, plantations still needed funds to provide for the laborers who had to look after the fields and nurture the young saplings. Thus, depending on their particular circumstances, landholders and laborers came to terms over who covered the initial expenses for equipment, upkeep and maintenance of the plants, as well as the daily needs of the laborers.

Laborers were expected to share in the capital outlay during the first three years of development, since they shared in the profit when the abaca fields start producing. In many cases, the landholder became indebted to the laborers at the beginning of a contract. Once the plantation became productive in its third or fourth year, the laborers start recouping their initial investment, and the landholder’s ‘debt’ decreased proportionately, based on a steady income from the abaca harvests. This income stream often continued throughout the useful life of the abaca plant, which was usually about 15 years since planting. For the lifetime of the plant, a laborer was assured of steady employment, and his initial investment of labor and capital was eventually paid in full. Most people involved in the Davao abaca industry considered it fair that the laborers had a claim to the abaca they planted. In one contested land application case, there were no objections between the parties in conflict when the laborer on the disputed land sold the abaca he planted to the eventual winner of the case.

Regardless of its form and variation, *pakyaw* contracts illustrated the centrality of abaca and labor to the Davao economy. Following government urgings of ‘progress and development,’ raising productivity levels was a key measure understood by all involved in the plantation economy. The land laws were also instrumental in shaping an applicant’s views on the essential importance of land productivity. The public land laws required that at least one-fourth of the land applied for must be improved and
cultivated before a homestead, free patent, or sales title could be given (Sec. 14, Sec. 30, Sec. 41 of Act. 2874). For many land applicants in Davao, the pakyaw arrangement was the easiest way to fulfill this legal requirement.

The focus on economic development and agricultural productivity was a major theme in many of the disputes lodged with the Bureau of Lands. Basically, these cases were contested over the improvements made on the land, and not on ownership of the land per se. Many such cases were resolved when the parties concerned came into an agreement over the sharing of abaca, in order to avoid an escalation of the conflict.

The prevalence of the pakyaw, and its ready adaptability to specific circumstances helped account for the relative absence of violence in Davao despite the inevitable clash of cultures that an influx of migrant peoples of different nationalities often experienced on the frontier. Most of the recorded violent plantation-related incidents in Davao happened before the pakyaw came to be widely used. Gov. Bolton and Christian’s double deaths and the succeeding huwes de kutsilyo by the American forces occurred in 1906. The spate of Japanese murders initiated by the “wild” tribes peaked in 1920, but by the 1930s, many Bagobo and other lumad tribes were already actively participating in the pakyaw as landholders. Perhaps the worst case of labor mortality was the estimated death of 200 to 300 Visayan workers in Kumassie Plantation between 1914 and 1923 due to extreme abuse and neglect by its manager. It was a scandalous affair in Davao when it became known after the laborers had complained to authorities, and with the help of the labor contractor, the Filipino manager was imprisoned as a result of the deaths and abuse.

Examples of these cases handled by the Laurel law firm are: Fidel Abella H.A. No. 51760, Baena (Bagoba) L.A. No. 2604, Jose A. Castro S.A. 15031, Misug (Mansaca), H.A. No. 36416 in Hijo Plantation Co. Folder, Diosdado Perez S.A. No. 7388 in Alejandra Navarro Folder.

Crimes against persons such as robbery, rape, and murder were reported in the 1930s, but usually over motives unrelated to land issues. See Folder 5 of the Hayden Papers at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

After the murder of the two Americans, the U.S. Army went after the perpetrators, often inflicting violence and killing many innocent indigenous civilians living in the area where the criminals were reported to be hiding. (Macario D Tiu, Davao 1890-1910: Conquest and Resistance in the Garden of the Gods (Quezon City: UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2003), 237–240.)

Davao residents saw these incidents as homicides stemming from personal conflicts. A number of Japanese were also killed by fellow Japanese, and these deaths were mistakenly attributed to “moros.” (Fred Roth, “Roth to Hayden,” May 19, 1935; Fred Roth, “Roth to A.V. Hartendorp,” May 19, 1935, Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.)
In 1933, the comparatively peaceful situation in Davao prompted the government to contemplate a withdrawal of three Constabulary detachments in the province.\textsuperscript{97} Visiting writers in the 1930s noted that “police are less in evidence” as Davao had fewer robberies than any other town they had visited.\textsuperscript{98} These reports are corroborated by old-time residents who recalled that 1930s Davao was a peaceful town, where one could sleep soundly at night.\textsuperscript{99} While there were anti-Chinese riots in Cabanatuan, Manila and San Pablo in the 1920s and 1930s, there was no such anti-Chinese sentiment, much less anti-Japanese riots in Davao. Even more noteworthy, post-World War II Davao residents’ memories of the 1930s was one of an “atmosphere of unstrained relations,” and they considered the Japanese as free of racial prejudice in their relationships with Filipinos.\textsuperscript{100}

6. Davao-Manila disconnection: The ‘Davao Land Problem’

If local conditions in Davao were peaceful, the emergent frontier’s relationship with the colonial capital was otherwise. Davao had good reasons to cause Manila some concern, especially over the “silent but steady penetration” of Japanese settlers on Davao landholdings. This concern steadily grew in the 1920s, fueled by several reports about Japanese settlement patterns and activities in Davao. One of the earliest reports was a 600-page confidential document submitted by the Bureau of Forestry to the Wood-Forbes Mission of 1921, detailing repeated violations of the forestry laws by Japanese plantation companies in Davao. The increased scale of immigration of Japanese to Davao, especially after they were barred entry to the U.S. under the Anti-Exclusion Act of 1924, prompted the Bureau of Lands to send an investigating team to Davao in 1926.\textsuperscript{101} But its subsequent report instead, ironically, extolled the contributions the Japanese had made to the rapid development of agriculture and industry in the southern province.\textsuperscript{102}

The continued entry of Japanese in Davao however, and their seeming dominance of the abaca industry eventually became a national issue, framed as the ‘Davao Land Problem’ in the mid-1930s. The decades-old nationalist rhetoric used by Manila-based politicians to bolster their popularity and political support finally caught up with Davao and its people. Philippine newspapers had a field day as the settler land issue was compounded by Japanese military incursions into China in the early 1930s.
The popular sentiment in Manila was so anti-Japanese that the Japanese population of Davao was looked upon with increasing suspicion. The Manila press even coined the political moniker “Davao-kuo” to rhyme with Japanese-ruled Manchu-kuo.

Certain arrangements accorded to the Japanese laborer in the pakyaw, such as being able to live on the plantation, build a house, and plant fruit trees for consumption, was now interpreted in Manila as the Japanese taking over Philippine land by stealth and permanence. The Philippine House of Representatives, believing that the Japanese controlled thousands of hectares of lands and trade, sent a team to Davao to investigate the pakyaw arrangement in 1932. But the investigators could not get knowledgeable people to shed light on the so-called “land” problem. The uncooperative Davao residents led the Manila authorities to become even more suspicious. The ‘Davao Land Problem’ became a hot topic in the Constitutional Convention, and nationalistic provisions on land and other natural resources were inserted into the Constitution with little opposition.103

Almost instantly, this growing concern with Japan turned into outright condemnation of many of the land applicants, the majority of whom were Filipino. Nationalist Manila politicians could not fathom, and even felt offended, that Filipinos would partner with the Japanese settlers in an era of growing Filipinization. It did not help Davao’s cause either that the rest of the land applicants were Americans. But with the problem centering increasingly on the pakyaw, the issue ceased to be an international one, and took the form of a major domestic legal dispute. The interpretation of the pakyaw’s legality came to signify a clash between elite politicians in nationalist Manila and a distant multicultural Davao. Filipino landholders were depicted as traitors to the nationalist cause who had sold their birthright, namely land, to aliens through the pakyaw, by agreeing to give as much as 90 percent of the profit to Japanese laborers.104 The product sharing arrangement familiar to many in Manila was based upon the tenancy sharing of rice cultivation in areas like Central Luzon where the laborers, or more specifically the tenants, only received 45 to 50 percent of the harvest, not counting expenses.105 Bureau officials in Manila believed that the small percentage the landholders received in the pakyaw made them nothing more than surrogates, or mere agents of the Japanese, in the latter’s quest for land and circumvention of the land laws.106
While the Secretary of Agriculture publicly stated that Davao was a “rich province but paradoxically its wealth [was] not in the hands of the Filipinos,” the Bureau of Lands now saw to it that foreigners henceforth would be prevented from using Filipinos “as stepping stones toward enriching themselves from the product of our fertile soil.”

The Bureau made it a future policy to apply “drastic measures” in cancelling the applications of those who partnered with a Japanese or a Chinese, especially if the applicant was a woman.

By early 1935, on the eve of the Commonwealth, the Department of Agriculture and Commerce (which the Bureau of Lands belonged to), and the Department of Justice took a concerted stance against the pakyaw, citing the “preservation of national patrimony.”

The Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce, backed by the Secretary of Justice, stated Filipino landholders, through the use of pakyaw contracts, had violated the public land law. The violations were based on Section 89 of the Public Land Act wherein the applicant was not allowed to “directly or indirectly, make any agreement or contract” by which the applicant’s rights “inure in whole or in part to the benefit of any person.” Supporting reasons for cancellation were also based on the failure of applicants to secure the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture before entering into agreements to “sell, assign, transfer, sublet or in any manner encumber the land or the right or rights” the applicant had acquired.

Citing these legal provisions, the Secretary of Agriculture proceeded to cancel over 470 Davao land applications subject to the pakyaw during the latter half of 1935. The plan was to make these lands, which were all planted with abaca, revert to government control, and to be administered henceforth by a Superintendent of Davao Plantations under the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Fiber Inspection Service, and the Bureau of Lands. However, the government was not able to take over the administration of the lands according to plan because most of the applicants fought the government order in the courts, and other external events intervened.

---

1 Such blatant generalizations in Manila prompted a Davao lawyer to send his female client’s photograph to the bureau to prove her capacity for independent thinking, explaining, “although she has had no opportunity to study, she has however, common sense and has had enough experience in life...as you can see from her features, she is a fairly forthright woman.” (Rafael Castillo, “Castillo to J.P. Laurel,” November 4, 1933, Tudtod, Rufina Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.) Author’s translations from the original Spanish.

2 The legal case between the Bagobos Salome and Aguianon vs. Jose A. Castro is an example of how the Bureau of Lands interpreted several violations on the pakyaw. See Appendix B for the details.
While the affected landholders fought their cancellations in court, and prepared for long legal battles, the ‘Davao Land Problem’ suddenly became a non-issue less than a year after it burst onto the national scene. In early 1936, President Quezon suspended the cancellations, and, in June that year, he announced before the National Assembly that “there is nothing in the so-called Davao Land Problem that should cause serious concern.” At the height of his power, the newly elected President of the Commonwealth, abruptly ended the ‘Davao Land Problem’ when he offered a different opinion, which exonerated the alleged wrongs done under the pakyaw in Davao, and the issue anti-climactically exited from the national scene.

The ‘Davao Land Problem’ had simply been resolved by a matter of interpretation. Quezon was not the first one to offer a more sympathetic interpretation of the pakyaw. In 1926, the Bureau of Lands had in fact initially ruled the pakyaw legal, as explained in their public land investigation report:

“The laborer, therefore, is a cropper and not a tenant in the contemplation of law, and when a lessee of public land hires the services of laborers under a contract of that nature it does not sublease or sublet the said land, as is erroneously believed.”

Thus, when the government deemed the pakyaw illegal in the early 1930s, it did not actually have the weight of legal precedence on its side. Such was the case that the Governor General’s office had considered legalizing the pakyaw retroactively, and just prohibiting similar subleases in the future. But the nationalist sentiment had temporarily given the ‘Davao Land Problem’ traction in the press and among Manila politicos.

Notwithstanding its short-lived duration, the sudden 1935 land application cancellations highlighted the longstanding political gulf between Davao and Manila. The focus on the “land” issue as the problem showed how far the metropole was out of touch with its frontier, as well as how the organization of Davao’s agricultural economy was just ahead of the times. Davao applicants had always considered the pakyaw as a labor contract that any businessman could enter lawfully into, and not a land arrangement. Japanese laborers for their part, usually entered the pakyaw expecting to be paid with abaca, a commodity and common purpose currency as good as cash in Davao, without any designs on necessarily owning land. Distant observers,
readily misunderstood the situation when the workings of the abaca industry and the realities of Davao frontier life were not taken into account. The following exchange between a Bureau of Lands investigator and a Japanese laborer is a case in point:

13. Q: Who owns the abaca you planted on the land?
   A: While the contract still exists and the fifteen-year term has not yet expired, I am the owner of the abaca, but when the 15-year term expires, Mr. Hughes owns the abaca.

14. Q: If Mr. Hughes tells you to leave the land, how about the abaca that you have planted and the house you built, will you leave them without asking him to pay for them, before the 15-year period expires?
   A: I will ask him to pay for the improvements I have introduced on the land if he tells me to leave before the expiration of our 15-year agreement.

15. Q: Now that the Government has cancelled the application of Mr. Hughes will you leave the land without any complaint if the Government orders you to vacate the premises?
   A: I will file a claim to the Government for the improvement I have introduced on the land because I have invested capital and labor therein and if I leave the land, I will have no place to get my livelihood.

16. Q: Why will you file a claim to the Government for the capital and labor that you have invested in the improvements that you introduced when the Government did not enter into any contract with you regarding your occupation and the introduction of the improvements on the land in question.
   A: If the Government orders Mr. Hughes to leave the land, I would like to remain on the land working for whoever owns the land because of the capital and labor that I have invested in it. If the Government orders me to leave the land, I will ask the Government to pay me for the labor and investment I have made.116

7. **International factors**

Despite the domestic and legal wrangling, the eventual resolution of the ‘Davao Land Problem’ owed as much to international factors, as it did to the concerns of the Philippine Commonwealth. The United States still handled the Philippines’ foreign affairs, and pressure was being put on the recently inaugurated Commonwealth government by both Washington and Tokyo to resolve the so-called “land problem.” The economic significance of abaca in the world market also enabled the major participants a certain degree of equanimity during the controversy, and thus contributed to its peaceful resolution.
America viewed the *pakyaw* as a benign arrangement based on its previous developmental policies in Davao, and its concern over the world supply of abaca. At the height of the controversy, acting Governor General Joseph Hayden advised Agriculture Secretary Rodriguez to deliberate carefully, noting that “the government itself and its officials are in part responsible for the present public land situation,” and “to do nothing that will unnecessarily retard the settlement of Davao.” Hayden was essentially advocating the positive policy position of his predecessors towards foreign investments and the development of public land. Even Governor General Harrison, the champion of Filipinization, supported Japanese development of Philippine lands, not only in Davao, and also favored foreign ownership of land. Quezon himself noted in 1939 that “the man who brought Ohta to Davao was Carpenter; and that it was Governor Forbes who sympathized with the policy of developing Mindanao with the help of foreigners.”

While the United States felt responsible for its colonial policies and practice with regard to Davao, it was far more concerned over the state of its fragile foreign relations with Japan in the 1930s. This increasing anxiety was felt at the highest levels in the White House. America was still in the process of mending its relationship with Japan due to the fallout that occurred after the passage of the Exclusion Act of 1924 which severely limited Japanese immigration to the United States, and which Japan strongly protested against. Further complicating diplomatic affairs was Japan’s military aggressions in China. America was thus careful, not wanting to provoke a war with Japan over “a few thousand hectares of Philippine land in Davao.” It was also important to Washington, that Davao conditions remain peaceful, so as not to disrupt its abaca production, since Davao supplied most grades of abaca that the American market needed in the 1930s.

Japan too, did not want the issue to cloud its relations with the United States or endanger the livelihood of the thousands of Japanese in the Philippines. Hence, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked to remove any impression that the United States had a hand in the controversy, explaining to the Japanese Imperial Diet in Tokyo

---

**U** Francis Burton Harrison, a Democrat, was the longest-serving Governor General of the Philippines from 1913 to 1921. Harrison implemented Rapid Filipinization wherein Filipinos replaced many Americans in the insular bureaucracy so as to move the cause of Philippine Independence forward by giving Filipinos practical experience in running their own country.
that the ‘Davao Land Problem’ was the result of a growing nationalism in the Philippines, and not one instigated by the United States. The Japanese foreign ministry also advocated a peace-at-all-cost policy when some pro-war sectors pushed for a military solution to the problem.\textsuperscript{123}

In the Philippines, the Japanese diplomats posted to Manila and Davao, together with the separate efforts of American officials, lobbied the Commonwealth government to respect the rights of the Japanese in Davao.\textsuperscript{124} The courts and diplomatic channels were used strategically to voice the concerns of Davao Japanese interests and protect their interests in Manila.\textsuperscript{125} Their cause was helped by the concerted efforts of the Davao Japanese Association in coordinating the various groups represented in the Japanese community.\textsuperscript{126} Interestingly, throughout the controversy, the Davao Japanese did not blame the Filipinos, but rather the widespread anti-Japanese feelings in the United States and among the overseas Chinese in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{127} This common attitude prevented any serious strain in the relationship between Filipinos and Japanese on the Davao plantations. On the contrary, the controversy only brought the two peoples closer together since both considered themselves the aggrieved parties. Diplomatic efforts behind the scenes were rewarded when less than one year after the first leases were cancelled by the Secretary of Agriculture, President Quezon suspended the lease cancellations, and put a lid on the “land” issue in his June 1936 speech delivered before the Philippine National Assembly.

The economic health of the Davao abaca industry in tandem with the recovery of the world market in the mid-1930s also helped maintain peace during the cancellation period, by providing economic stability among the affected industry participants. When the ‘Davao Land Problem’ erupted locally, Davao abaca had been receiving strong reviews from American cordage manufacturers. American trade magazines commended Davao’s scientific methods that “have resulted in the production of a type of fiber which is attractive to ropemakers,” and how “Davao grades have increased in favor, [with] spinners showing their appreciation for its superior preparation and more reliable grading.”\textsuperscript{128}
The global premium that was placed on Davao abaca and the improved prices of the commodity on world markets, enabled Davao land applicants to pay lawyers to contest the cancellations in the courts in Davao and Manila. These affected Filipino applicants also planned to pool their resources to pay for future legal fees. Local Japanese corporations paid the legal fees of affected Japanese laborers, after having been convinced by their Filipino lawyers that if the laborers lost, their cases could set a precedent that would eventually be detrimental to their corporate interests.

Bringing the cancellation cases to court enabled the pakya status quo to remain, thereby ensuring that abaca production was not unduly hampered by the controversy, with most of the laborers continuing to work on the farms and plantations. After 1935, Davao abaca production went up every year until the Second World War. In 1939, Manila finally acknowledged Davao’s new economic position in national life when the Tribune Newspaper, a major publication in the country, featured the go-ahead province in a special supplement. Aptly, the lead story was entitled, “Progress of Davao City Phenomenal: once wilderness is now great commercial center.”

Having burst onto the national scene and consciousness in the 1930s due to the “Land Problem,” Davao appeared to have come a long way from the peripheral frontier “backwater” it was at the turn of the century. Fittingly, at the center of the “Land Problem” was the pakya, the unique arrangement undertaken on the Davao plantations by multi-national participants of the abaca industry. The pakya was a contractual labor arrangement specifically made to cater to the realities of this labor-scarce, commodity export-driven Philippine frontier. It must be recalled that the first plantations were established before the passage of the Philippine Organic Act of 1902, or the 1903 Public Land Law, and even before the colonial administrative apparatus of Mindanao was clearly defined. Land laws then, were considered necessary, but not deemed the essential end-all of establishing and developing frontier plantations. In 1905, even when they were technically considered squatters at that early time, Davao planters (Americans, Spanish, Filipino, Lebanese, Japanese and other nationalities), enunciated that they had “every faith” that the government would protect their rights
as settlers to cultivate and develop the land. In the 1930s, Davao planters and laborers with the public and private efforts of the American, Japanese and Philippine governments, still had reason to maintain that “faith” and belief.

5 Frank McIntyre, “F. McIntyre to L. Wood,” July 28, 1924.
8 Roosevelt, 182.
9 “Report of Lands in the Philippine Islands Sold or Leased, or Contracted to Be Sold or Leased, by the Government of the Philippine Islands since July 1st, 1902, in Tracts of more than Sixteen Hectares to One Person, or Ten Hundred Twenty-Four Hectares to Any Corporation, or Association of Persons, Stating in Each Case the Number of Hectares Sold or Leased, or Contracted to Be Sold or Leased, Name of Purchaser or Lessee, and since Such Purchaser or Lessee Shall Have Attempted to Make Such Purchase as Agent for Any Other Person, Association or Corporations, Then the Name of Such Person, Association or Corporation, If Known; Whether Such Lands Were Part of the Public Domain of the Philippine Islands or Friar Lands, the Price or Rental Paid or to Be Paid in Each Case; Also Applications Pending for Sale or Lease of Any Such Lands in the Philippine Islands in Lots or Tracts of More than Sixteen Hectares to Any Individual or Ten Hundred Twenty-Four Hectares to Any Corporation or Association or Individuals,” May 5, 1910, 15–16.
14 P.J. Wester, Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago: Their Natural Resources and Opportunities for Development (Manila: Bureau of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1922), 56.
15 Wester, 55.
18 Commission of the Census, 233.
20 Commission of the Census, Census of the Philippines: 1939 (Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1940), 650.
21 Frank McIntyre, “F. McIntyre to L. Wood,” July 28, 1924.
22 “Public Lands and Franchises, Statement of Elihu Root, Secretary of War,” § Committee on Insular Affairs (1902), 2.
23 Public Lands and Franchises, Statement of Elihu Root, Secretary of War, 11.
25 Frank H. Golay, Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946, Published in cooperation with University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for Southeast Asian Studies Center (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 88.
30 “Statement by Senator Sergio Osmena, President Protempore of the Philippine Senate and Special Representative of the Philippine Legislature to the United States,” January 19, 1926, Public Lands, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
34 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, “Memorandum for the Secretary of War,” Memorandum, February 2, 1918, 1-2.
35 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, 2.
36 Robert Lansing, “Confidential Memorandum of the Secretary of State to the Secretary of War,” June 26, 1918, 5, 212 Public Lands, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
37 Frank McIntyre, “Memorandum for the Secretary of War,” July 13, 1921, RG 350, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
38 C. Carballo, “Annual Report of the Director of Lands, 1921” (Manila: Bureau of Lands, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1923), 35.
41 Sherman, 8.
42 “Padada Agricultural Co. Folder,” n.d., Davao Land Cases, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
43 Sherman, “What’s Wrong with the Lands Bureau?,” 8.
44 Sherman, 15.
46 Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Land Resources of the Philippines (Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1939), 22.
48 Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Land Resources of the Philippines, 22.
50 Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Land Resources of the Philippines, 12.
51 Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 16.
Governor General: Non-Christians of Davao,” September 3, 1930, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.

54 Alberto Zamora, “Counter-Memorandum for the Applicant-Appelles, Petronilo S. Narciso,” October 3, 1934, 1, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


57 Jose P. Laurel, “Laurel to Castillo,” March 10, 1928, Francisco Villa-Abrille Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


59 Jose V. Diaz, “Memorandum for the Applicant & Respondent, Cipriano Villafuerte,” September 1, 1933, 2, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


61 “Digest in the Report in RE-S.A. No. 12531 of Alejandra Navarro,” n.d., Navarro, A. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation; Laurel, Del Rosario and Sabido to the Director of Lands,” March 17, 1935, 1, Suarez, Felicidad vda. de, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


63 Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 142.


66 “Feared as the Devil,” The Strait Times, December 3, 1923.


71 Edwards and Saleeby, “Abaca (Manila Hemp),” 22.


73 Edards, “Feared as the Devil,” The Strait Times, December 3, 1923.


Joseph Ralston Hayden, “The President - Notes on Conversation with” (Cosmos Club, March 3, 1936), 3, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.


Lydia N. Yu Jose, Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944 (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 126.


Fred Roth, “Roth to Hayden,” August 16, 1935, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library; Yu Jose, Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944, 127.

Yu Jose, Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944, 127, 135.


Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Murdoch University, 1984), 302.


CHAPTER 5
THE BUSINESS OF SUPPLYING WORLD MARKETS

1. Davao and the market prices of abaca: A survey

When the Americans occupied the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth century, abaca prices on the world market were high as compared with the average prices of the final decades of the nineteenth century. Abaca attained an average of ₱18.50 per picul in 1900 when the supply slumped due to the conduct of the Philippine-American War in the abaca-growing regions of Luzon (Table 5.1). Consequently, guerilla activities in Bicol produced a panic in the binder twine industry in the United States. The high price of abaca prompted the first batch of pioneer planters led by Capt. Burchfield, from the hemp-growing state of Kentucky, to venture into abaca production, adding his plantation to the small list of Spanish-era abaca haciendas in Davao. Several plantations in Davao were producing their first harvests of abaca fiber by 1902, taking full advantage of the good hemp prices that lasted until 1907.

Table 5.1
Abaca Market Prices, 1899-1911

![Average Pesos per Picul, all grades, 1899-1911](image-url)
The high prices for abaca between 1900 and 1907 encouraged more Americans to open abaca plantations on the Davao frontier, and confirmed the belief among them that Davao was truly a land of promise. However, prices dropped starting in 1908 and hit rock bottom in 1911 at ₱12.00 per picul when sisal replaced abaca as a primary component of binder twine in the United States. Hence, Americans who had started their plantations a few years earlier suffered serious financial losses. In 1914, many sold their plantations to Japanese buyers when market prices improved at the start of the First World War (Table 5.2). The abaca market price reached its zenith of ₱50.00 per picul in 1918 but fell in 1919 when war-time demand subsided.4

The price malaise continued until 1921. During this time, a consortium led by the Philippine National Bank made the prices even worse through speculation and monopolizing the market by stockpiling Manila hemp. The failed attempt to corner the market only pushed U.S. and British merchants and manufacturers to use substitutes such as African and Mexican fibers, and dampened global demand for abaca.5 However, when market forces were allowed to run their course, prices steadily rose over the next five years, enabling investment in the plantations by Filipino landholders.
who benefited from the anti-foreign land laws enacted in 1919. These landholders joined their compatriots who had been involved as laborers in the abaca industry since its inception, thereby boosting Filipino presence in the Davao abaca industry by the 1920s.

Table 5.3
Philippine Abaca Production
Davao and Other Provinces, 1915-1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Davao (in bales)</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Other Provinces (in bales)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Philippine Total(^a) (in bales)</th>
<th>Percent(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>34,320</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>977,016</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>1,011,336</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>48,584</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>1,267,079</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
<td>1,745,663</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>81,580</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1,210,271</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>1,291,851</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>106,997</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1,214,482</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
<td>1,321,479</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>109,511</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>1,056,975</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
<td>1,166,486</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>126,933</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>924,668</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>1,051,601</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>131,708</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>561,114</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>692,822</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>182,537</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>1,026,551</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>1,209,088</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>185,553</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>1,246,868</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>1,432,421</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>192,333</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>1,249,414</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>1,441,747</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>191,225</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>1,018,075</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>1,209,300</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>201,879</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>1,036,254</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>1,238,133</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>197,469</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>1,031,650</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>1,229,119</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>310,647</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>1,076,250</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>1,386,897</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>411,710</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>1,178,633</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>1,590,343</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>433,023</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>841,436</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>1,274,459</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>373,186</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>697,961</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>1,071,147</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>327,376</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>545,578</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>872,954</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>508,430</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>719,557</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>1,227,987</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>646,680</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>794,522</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>1,441,202</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>578,128</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>902,268</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>1,480,396</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>464,585</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>830,425</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>1,295,010</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increased Filipino participation in the industry coincided with new knowledge of abaca varieties. There was also innovation in the production and marketing processes due to the *pakyaw*, mechanization, and the auction system, which had enabled the Davao plantations to become a major force in the Philippine abaca industry. In 1921, when abaca production in other provinces halved because of low market prices, Davao production bucked the trend, enabling it to increase its share in national production to 19 percent, from just 9 percent two years earlier (Table 5.3). In 1923, as prices rose, such was the rate of plantations being opened in Davao that some established planters found it more profitable to sell abaca suckers than to grow the plants for fiber. \(^7\)

---

\(^a\) Philippine Total column is derived from the same historical data for Davao and Other Provinces.

\(^b\) The Philippine Total Percent column is derived from the same historical data for Davao and Other Provinces.
Between 1927 and 1928 alone, Davao production increased by almost 60 percent, an astonishing figure when compared to the meager 4 percent increase in other provinces.\(^8\)

The efficiency that Davao production achieved in the 1920s enabled the industry to withstand another steep price shock during the Depression years of the early 1930s. Buoyed by increased uses for the fiber in the United States and Japan, and, a rapid drop in production from other abaca-growing regions in the Philippines, Davao production levels dipped by less than fifty thousand piculs only when prices bottomed out in 1932.\(^9\) While smaller Davao plantations felt the full effects of the financial turmoil and neglected their fields, larger plantations, and those under the *pakyaw*, operated with efficiency during the Great Depression.\(^10\) The relative health of the Davao plantations enabled the abaca industry to adjust production levels when demand rose in the mid-1930s, and this continued up to the eve of the Second World War.

2. Merchant houses and the tumultuous turn-of-the-century

Riding the highs and lows of the market price were the merchant houses specializing in the commodity trade. Abaca was king of commodities in the late-nineteenth-century Philippines, and these merchant houses provided a crucial link between local abaca producers and foreign end-users. When the Americans took control of the Philippines, there were already several well-established Anglo-American merchant houses in the Philippine abaca trade. These houses supplied abaca to New York and London through a network of agents and branches in Bicol and the Visayas that sourced supply from Filipino-Chinese local dealers.\(^11\)

In an era when trusts controlled the oil and steel industries of the United States, newspapers pointed to a similar situation in the abaca business, noting that only a few merchant houses in the Philippines controlled the entire global trade.\(^12\) Speculation, made acute by a military blockade in the abaca provinces during the Philippine-American War, caused prices to rise to unprecedented levels between 1899 and 1902.\(^c\)

\(^c\) Despite the blockade, smuggling was widespread. General MacArthur blamed smuggling for prolonging the war, noting that had the “absolute suppression of all traffic in hemp been enforced the insurrection must have terminated months ago through sheer lack of resources.” (Arthur MacArthur, “Declassified Report on the Manila Hemp Situation with Regards Pearce Letter,” Confidential
As a result, American agricultural interests became involved because abaca was a major component of binder twine, the basic material farmers used for wheat harvests. Abaca’s high price had made binder twine very expensive, as abaca price also affected those of other binder twine fibers such as sisal and jute. Many feared a chain reaction affecting the prices of wheat and bread. Thus, American cordage manufacturers and farmers in the wheat belt pressured their government to lift the blockade and re-open the hemp ports to avoid a domestic crisis. In an urgent letter to Department of War Secretary Elihu Root, Missouri Representative Charles Pierce, on behalf of the “agricultural sections of the West and Northwest,” requested an investigation into the price hike, even suspecting abaca interests to be behind the escalating war in Samar and Leyte.¹³

Pierce’s suspicions were given weight by the military governor of the Philippines, General Arthur MacArthur, who during the investigation, pointed to trading syndicates as responsible for the high abaca prices. A rivalry between a syndicate under the leadership of Spanish-Filipino firm Mendezona & Co., and the Anglo-American houses of Warner Barnes and Smith Bell & Co., had caused a bidding war.¹⁴ To make matters worse, speculators in New York and London joined the fray.¹⁵ McArthur defended his military administration stating that it could do no more to control the contesting parties than the federal government could control similar circumstances in the United States.¹⁶

In what was dubbed the “hemp war,” merchant houses either sold (shorted) or bought abaca in mid-1899, depending on their opinion as to whether the Philippine-American War was going to last a long time or end soon. When prices soared in the last quarter of 1899, reaching a high of US$331.16 per bale in December (from just US$73.05 in June 1897), those who sold their hemp early had to buy stock back at much higher prices, taking heavy losses.¹⁷ Fortunes were made and lost overnight in Manila, New York, and London, bringing abaca into the league of over-speculated railroad stocks. Prices stabilized in early 1900 after the re-opening of the hemp ports in February when the U.S. Army gained control over key parts of the Philippines.

Declassified (Manila: Office of the United States Military Governor in the Philippine Islands, May 16, 1901), 7, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)
The impact and prominence of this hemp panic brought abaca to the attention of more commodity traders in New York. Merchant firms there requested the colonial government to “gather and publish” information on abaca. In January 1903, the Bureau of Insular Affairs ordered Governor General William Howard Taft to publish information on abaca and other Philippine crops “of a nature similar to that furnished here [in the United States] by the crop service of the Department of Agriculture regarding the staple crops of the United States.” The ensuing reports closely followed the format and content of American agricultural reporting, including information on climate data.

3. Farmers, merchants, manufacturers and government agents during the early twentieth-century

The hemp panic also attracted notoriety to the role of local and foreign abaca merchants in an industry where market forces held sway not only over price fluctuations, but also in the quality of fiber produced. Merchants, however, only exercised limited control over quality since it was the prerogative of the Filipino farmers to respond to market prices. The poor quality that was the subject of turn-of-the-century complaints was due to farmers responding to unprecedented high market prices. As was the case in the past, during periods of high market value, farmers tended to produce more low-grade fibers than high-grade ones. Farmers earned more by selling low-grade abaca in bulk, rather than spend the extra time to produce only a few kilos of premium quality, since they could extract inferior-grade fibers in less time with less effort. In periods of high market prices, Filipino abaca cultivators relied on increased demand for low-quality cheap fiber from foreign manufacturers who found current prices too expensive and ordered a lower grade fiber.

Abaca exporters on both sides of the Atlantic expected such problems to develop whenever prices were high and they used arbitration to adjust prices according to the quality of the landed abaca purchased by their clients, the manufacturers. While arbitration was time-consuming, it was how the industry solved the problem of inconsistent abaca quality. The general position of the merchants was to endorse a system that had been in place for decades, and from which they profited. But they recognized in the process that they had relinquished quality control of abaca to the Filipino farmers.
Consequently, it fell to the American cordage manufacturers to bring the problem to the attention of the U.S. government, mindful of their nation’s newfound dominance over the Philippines, the major source of abaca. Several manufacturers wrote about recent concerns over inferior and mixed grade fibers received from export houses in Manila, even from firms long engaged in supplying the American market. They also complained about the weak nature of fibers coming from the provinces compared to those packed in Manila. Ultimately, a weak fiber made it impossible to guarantee the strength of hoisting ropes, hawsers and towing lines, upon which “valuable property and human lives” depended.

In response to the American manufacturers’ complaints, the U.S. Department of Agriculture sent agriculturist H.T. Edwards on a fact-finding mission across the archipelago in early 1903. As the recently-minted fiber expert in the Philippine Bureau of Agriculture, Edwards was instructed to get first-hand accounts of conditions in the abaca industry, the first such effort by the government to survey the industry. Edward’s mandate was broad. He studied the cultivation of the plant and its extraction into a saleable fiber. He collected varieties of the plant, as well as explored the lesser known use of the fiber for textiles. In his report, he recommended the establishment of a government experimental station to test varieties of abaca, and encouraged the development of a hemp stripping machine to improve extraction of the fiber. Most important of all, Edwards endorsed a uniform grading system under government regulation, a job heretofore left in the hands of merchants, as the answer to the perennial problem of producing low-quality abaca.

In the traditional abaca market, buyers and exporters were responsible for classification and baling, utilizing a system based on shipper’s marks. The foreign commercial houses monopolizing the Philippine trade used private grades as agreed upon among themselves and their buyers abroad. However, these firms also obtained their supply from local merchants over whom they exercised no quality control. It was hard to pinpoint responsibility in cases where the outer part of a bale contained good quality fiber but the inner parts were mixed with inferior strands, stones, or not properly dried. Edwards laid the responsibility for quality control at the doorsteps of the foreign merchant houses, while the latter, in turn, blamed the Filipino farmers.
The export houses opposed the idea of a uniform grading system, stating it would not improve the general quality of abaca. They recommended instead that government enact stringent laws against the farmers. The exporters urged the government to declare fraudulent all badly prepared abaca, punish farmers found with serrated knives which were responsible for low-quality fiber, prohibit the stripping of day-old stalks, and make mixing grades a penal offense.

However, the government did not respond immediately. The U.S. federal government and the Philippine insular bureau had differing views on the matter. The U.S. Department of Agriculture supported inspections under the supervision of the Philippine government, citing the experience of New Zealand’s much-improved fiber export market after instituting government inspection. However, the Philippine insular bureaucracy was not keen on the added responsibility, considering it “impracticable and inadvisable” due to a lack of qualified personnel.

Since abaca prices fell beginning in 1908, manufacturer’s complaints decreased but did not disappear. As a result, it remained business-as-usual for all players in the industry over the next five years, with the merchants retaining their system of house marks for grading abaca. Cordage manufacturers made repeated attempts to keep the debate on standardized grading alive by lobbying the U.S. Congress, but without much success. While the commodity’s duty-free entry to the United States left the abaca industry free of the intense political negotiations between Manila and Washington that prevailed in the sugar industry, this tax-free status, however, fostered complacency among Filipino abaca producers, some of whom were members of the Philippine Legislature. Thus, ultimately, it was commercial imperatives that compelled the Philippine government to act. The quality of Philippine abaca became so degraded that its price dropped severely between 1909 and 1913. Even sisal, a fiber inferior in quality to abaca, commanded higher prices in the market, as binder twine manufacturers developed new ways of using sisal as a substitute for abaca. Losing the business of binder-twine manufacturers finally forced the Philippine government to take action. In February 1914, the Philippine Legislature drafted a bill that became Act 2380 which passed in June, creating the Fiber Standardization Board, which began operations on January 1, 1915.
With a draft of the bill in hand, the insular government’s new fiber expert (and former Davao planter), Murad M. Saleeby, conferred with hemp merchants and manufacturers in the United States and England regarding government grading in the spring of 1914. American manufacturers supported a government inspection board and were willing to change the old practice of using house marks which produced inconsistent size and quality within the bales.\(^{40}\) The British ropemakers, who used a different set of grades, likewise expressed their support for the introduction of a system of uniform classification.\(^{41}\) All manufacturers saw the bill as a means to maintain control over the quality of fiber they purchased.\(^{42}\)

Merchants, brokers, and dealers, however, saw the new law as usurping their traditional role and authority as fiber graders. Similar to their stance in 1903, the brokers insisted that the government deal strictly with Filipino producers to maintain quality control over abaca. One London merchant even suggested following the old Spanish practice of burning inferior hemp.\(^ {43}\) American policy, however, prevented such harsh measures being implemented. The insular government preferred market forces to compel Filipino producers to improve the quality of their abaca. Thus, Saleeby explained to a British hemp shipper,

> according to the American Constitution, [the insular government] could not compel a native to produce any particular article, or forbid him to produce any particular article. If he liked to produce coarse hemp, and found anybody was willing to buy coarse hemp, he could do it.\(^ {44}\)

But since the brokers had no choice in the matter, they eventually adjusted to the standard grades established by the Fiber Standardization Board.\(^ {45}\) Initially, they adjusted by marketing their house-marked abaca as being of a much better quality than the government-graded ones. Some brokers took to splitting grades. This was done by taking fiber graded in the old way and mixing them with a certain government grade to make it appear that they have a higher-priced fiber.\(^ {46}\) As a result, manufacturers bought both government grades and merchant-house-graded abaca to fill required orders, and went into arbitration when the quality was lower than expected.\(^ {47}\) But in ensuing years, market demand rendered this old practice obsolete when manufacturers placed orders solely for government grades. One cordage manufacturer reasoned that restricting their purchases to government grades had the
same effect as buying house marks and government grades mixed altogether, without the hassle of arbitration.  

The Fiber Standardization Board created 21 listed grades under four categories of ‘Excellent,’ ‘Good,’ ‘Fair’ and ‘Course,’ and took control of the grading function from the export firms. The law institutionalized the provenance of abaca in 11 major districts, including “South Mindanao.” This was the first time the Davao brand was differentiated from other abaca-growing areas. Government grading stations established in various locations across the country during the Great War years numbered 110, with a staff of 50 inspectors by 1920. In 1924, Davao had stations in Talomo, Malita, Daliaon, and one in the town center.

A direct effect of government grading was to draw Davao abaca to the merchant’s attention after fiber provenance became a means of identifying quality. Brokers referred to provenance as a way to distinguish one fiber from another of the same grade since government grades did not recognize intermediate grades. For example, government ‘Grade I’ or ‘Good Fair’ included the old grade range of ‘Current’ and ‘12 ½% Over.’ The ‘Good Fair’ of Sorsogon was almost always equal to its old grade of ‘12 ½% Over,’ while the ‘Good Fair’ of East Leyte was hardly ever better than the previous ‘Current.’ The Fiber Board kept the grades of each district constant, as manufacturers ordered grades by districts as a way to obtain their customary quality from the era of pre-government grading. Identifying the grade by location proved beneficial to Davao as its machine-produced abaca attained a consistency and quality no other district equaled.

4. The Great War boom and bust

Saleeby’s conferences with American and British rope manufacturers in 1914 concluded just as World War I began. Increased consumption due to the war and consistent quality control due to Philippine government inspection was a benefit to the abaca industry. Wartime conditions forced buyers to accept government regulations and the institutionalized adoption of government standards. The British Cordage Manufacturers Association adopted a new contract for fiber purchases stipulating buyers order their fiber according to the established government standard. Only those with proper certification from the government as to the quality and grade
of the bales could sell in the British market. Driven by war-time demand, British shippers quickly acceded to the terms, and stopped the splitting of grades. In cases where Philippine certificates mentioned mixed fiber, or other adverse conditions, shippers requested permission to clean up the affected lots, in order to secure clean certificates from the Philippine government.

The war created shortages in Russian and Italian hemp, as well as Mexican sisal in the global fiber market. In the midst of unprecedented fiber demand, the Bureau of Agriculture mounted a campaign in the abaca provinces to increase high-grade production in 1915. Despite increased production, it still did not meet the rising demand for high-grade abaca used by foreign navies. Bicol abaca experienced a slump in quality due to a severe drought in early 1915, followed by a series of typhoons from October 1915 to January 1916. The effects of such adverse weather in the Philippines resulted in cordage manufacturers in England receiving poor quality abaca at the height of war production.

The war also stimulated demand from Japan, which entered the war on the Allied side in August 1914. As a late entrant to the global abaca market, Japan willingly paid higher prices for the commodity during the war, to the consternation of Britain and the United States. Abaca merchants, sensing windfall war-time opportunities, sold their stocks of fiber to the highest bidder. This practice eventually led to a supply shortage in the Philippines’ largest market, the United States, by 1916. Although Davao abaca production was not yet substantial, accounting for only 3.4 percent of the national total in 1915, frantic merchants started looking at Davao as an alternative source of fiber during the drought that threatened production in the northern provinces that year.

Supply became even more restricted when the United States entered World War I in April 1917, and demand continued to rise. The United States Exports Administrative Board and the United States Shipping Board in Washington, D.C. took control of Philippine exports of abaca in order to ensure supply of this strategic war material to the U.S. Navy. The U.S. government was so concerned to ensure supply for its war effort that other countries, such as Norway, were initially refused a license to
ship abaca from Manila. Abaca exports to the United States rose to 1,500 tons in 1917, with another 9,000 tons alone earmarked for the Navy Department in 1918.64

The entry of the U.S. into the war tested the merchants’ inclination to make a profit against their sense of patriotism, and the government was aware of this merchant mindset. There were examples of Manila merchants refusing to quote prices for the preferred U.S. grades, fearing that the government would regulate prices.65 The Bureau of Insular Affairs even contemplated loading abaca bound for the United States in German merchant ships to ensure the safety of transpacific cargo, relying on a merchant’s business instincts over his national loyalty.66 To prevent profiteering and a replay of the ‘hemp war’ at the turn of the century, the British government prohibited private speculation in abaca in return for permission from Washington to buy abaca in the Philippines. The British government used the power of accreditation as a means of control. It allowed only six leading British trading firms – Smith, Bell & Co. Ltd., Warner, Barnes & Co., W.F. Stevenson & Co., Pacific Commercial Company, Ker & Co., and McLeod & Company – as the sole merchants and traders of abaca during the war.67

By February 1918, the American government, concerned with soaring prices, proposed a plan to fix the price of abaca for at least four months, or the time it took to ship the fiber from Manila to the Navy Yard on the U.S. east coast.68 The brokers only asked the government to specify a definite amount of tonnage, and uniform freight rates to prevent loss of revenue. The Bureau of Insular Affairs, with Filipino producers in mind, urged the Council of National Defense to maintain the high prices to encourage production of needed grades.69 The cordage manufacturers, however, opposed this type of government control, concerned it would strangle the supply of abaca at the source. They believed undue government regulation would compel abaca farmers to stop production of required grades. Similar letters to that of the American Manufacturing Company cited below warned the U.S. government to go easy on regulating the hemp trade:

...we wish to suggest that a disastrous blunder will be made if this regulation is made to apply in the United States than in the Islands... to apply our rough and

---

D The grades exported to Japan were exempt from price fixing since they were different from the U.S. or British demand. (Francis Burton Harrison, “Harrison to Sec. of War, Jan. 21, 1918,” Telegram, (January 21, 1918), 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)
ready pig iron methods to those natives, might result in a diminution of production, sufficient to ruin our government in its war preparations... owing to the failure of the white man to understand the psychological process that rule the orientals. Those psychological processes sometimes cut off supplies of Fibers, without any reason that we can determine. As the existence of our business depends upon the continuous running of [m]ills,... we have not hesitated to at times take great losses, in order to be sure of a supply of material.  

Nonetheless, Washington imposed price controls for four months from March 25 to July 25, 1918. Governor Harrison fixed Manila prices based on New York rates but suspended the measure by June due to lack of shipping space. At the end of July, the U.S. War Industries Board established a maximum rate to regulate the price but not to peg it; a measure meant to allow for adjustments based on supply and demand. However, overstocked warehouses and lack of merchant ships contributed to low market activity. The poor performance of the market had Philippine interests worried about unsold stocks, and the idea to boost abaca prices gained traction among local banks involved in the industry.

At the end of the war and its price controls, two “diametrically opposite views” with regard to the future price of abaca developed between the two transpacific markets. New York traders took a wait-and-see position on the expectation that prices would decline based on the volume of surplus and the supply from incoming harvests. American traders expected that a normal supply and demand pattern would resume. In the Philippines, however, local traders expected government support to maintain high prices and the resumption of overseas manufacturing demand. The Philippine government did interfere in the post-war market to prop up the price through the government owned Philippine National Bank (PNB), much to the chagrin of the foreign abaca dealers. PNB traders shipped large stocks of abaca to the United States, even when these stocks did not have buyers. Export figures show that over 100,000 bales of unsold abaca went to the U.S. market in the last quarter of 1918, against the normal average of no more than 8,000 unsold bales. It was only a matter of time before the contest between an over-supplied market on the one hand, and strict government control on the other, would have disastrous effects on the future of the abaca industry.

During the heyday of wartime expansion, the Philippine National Bank over-extended itself, making multi-million peso loans to medium-sized abaca traders, and,
in the process, created an unsustainable demand in the abaca markets. When the bubble burst, the bank was saddled with large stocks of unsold abaca after it was compelled to foreclose on several borrowers. To cover its escalating losses and recover money for its directors, the bank engaged in market manipulation during the final days of the war, when abaca prices were declining. PNB extended loans totaling ₱2.6 million to firms owned by its directors namely, V. Madrigal & Co. and Fernandez Hermanos, to buy the large stocks of surplus abaca in an effort to prop up the falling market price. PNB secretly channeled its funds through the firms to avoid detection of its interference in the market. However, the unlawful attempt failed to save its over-exposed borrowers from bankruptcy, and earned the ire of exporters in New York.

a. The Philippine National Bank fiasco

The seeds of the fiasco were sown as early as September 1918, when the abaca markets started to slow down because of the surplus stockpile in both dealers and manufacturers warehouses in Europe, America and the Philippines. The end of the war in mid-November raised prices as dealers expected normal demand to pick up with the corresponding end of the high wartime freight rates. But defying all expectations, abaca prices fell by the end of November, as manufacturers held off purchases expecting further price cuts, much to the distress of dealers. While the PNB agent in New York forecast future depressed prices, even suggesting government intervention, PNB headquarters in Manila still believed demand would rise. The bank thus continued to hold on to its large holdings of hemp in its disguised accounts and from its foreclosed borrowers.

The end-of-the-war market contraction left the PNB in a quandary. The abaca stocks it needed to dispose of were large enough to manipulate the diminished post-war abaca market. Estimated to hold 80% of the New York hemp supply, the bank set its selling price at 20 centavos a pound, forcing abaca prices up, but not high enough to reach 26 centavos, the wartime purchase price of the bank’s stocks. PNB faced a loss, and it was only a question of how big a loss it could sustain with the passage of time. Taking full advantage of its institutional connections in the United States, the bank attempted to enlist the help of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA) to have the Emergency Fleet Corporation, the U.S. Food Administration, and the U.S. Navy
purchase their stocks. However, these government agencies were non-committal, since they still had their own abaca stocks or existing contracts with other merchant houses.

In May 1919, the PNB finally negotiated a deal with a binder twine manufacturer to dispose of its hemp, around 70,000 bales, at moderate rates, with the bank taking a loss. It caused a shock in the fiber market since most binder-twine manufacturers had shifted to sisal during the war. News of the deal strengthened global abaca prices in mid-1919 at the expense of sisal to such an extent that the Mexican sisal cartel cut production to boost sisal prices.

**b. Backlash from the American hemp traders**

There was no love lost between the PNB and the New York hemp dealers. When PNB’s intervention in the abaca market became known in New York and London in late 1918, the established merchant firms accused the bank of violating the codes of conduct of the banking profession by entering the hemp trade. The bank’s attempt to corner the market forced hemp dealers to hold on to their abaca stocks, which caused a market contraction. In January 1919, traders described the Philippine market as a “mere ghost of its former self,” while a merchant described the U.S. trade as “dead and monotonous.” U.S. demand was at historically low levels, and abaca stocks in Manila and Cebu warehouses increased to 320,000 bales, an unparalleled figure in the history of the trade.

It did not help relations with the hemp dealers when the Philippine Legislature started to draft a bill to create a government-controlled company tasked to develop the natural resources of the Philippines, including abaca. The company had already begun operations as the legislature drafted the law to create it. American hemp dealers joined rope and twine manufacturers to protest against the establishment of this semi-government entity, wary of its ability to influence the price of abaca in the future. In February 1919, worried American dealers and manufacturers blamed the company, in its short period of operation, for raising the price of ‘Fair Current’ abaca from ₱33 per picul in December 1918 to ₱33.50, despite a reduction in new harvests due to damaging December typhoons in Bicol and the Visayas. Unperturbed by American opposition, the Philippine Legislature passed Act 1248 on March 10, 1919,
legally establishing the Philippine National Development Company (NDC), and further straining international relationships in the abaca business.\textsuperscript{90}

In response to the upward pressure caused by the NDC, American dealers and manufacturers withheld orders to drive prices down.\textsuperscript{91} Even lower shipping rates failed to stimulate demand by March and April in New York.\textsuperscript{92} American actions created an impression among the Filipino lawmakers that United States firms were manipulating the market, and Philippine interests were being unjustly treated. The Filipino politicians sent a person to Spain and England to open new markets, and plans were drawn up to establish a cordage manufacturing plant in Manila, as well as an abaca cartel to regulate Philippine abaca production.\textsuperscript{93}

Tense relations between New York and Manila provided an opportunity for more British firms to import fiber directly from the Philippines rather than source it from New York, when wartime restrictions on abaca imports in Britain were lifted on April 1, 1919.\textsuperscript{94} Diminishing U.S. abaca stocks and British competitors taking advantage of low prices to produce cheap ropes sold in the United States, worried American cordage manufacturers. Under these circumstances, many U.S. manufacturers intensified their experiments with sisal and wire rope as substitutes for abaca.\textsuperscript{95} The market standoff between New York and Manila developed into a full-blown collapse in late 1920 that persisted into the following year, when average prices fell to their lowest level in seven years.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{c. British complaints and low-grade suppression}

While British orders provided a slim lifeline to the Philippine abaca industry during the standoff with United States dealers, the quality of abaca shipped to London provided cause for complaint. Due to the stagnant 1919 market, many of the bales received in London had been in storage six to seven months in Philippine warehouses, causing deterioration, especially among the British-preferred lower grades.\textsuperscript{97} Consequently, for most of 1920, the Philippine Bureau of Agriculture received strongly-worded letters of complaint about poor quality hemp from the British. Frustration turned to threats as London manufacturers vowed to stop using abaca altogether, use
substitute fibers instead, or go back to the old practice\(^8\) of using house marks.\(^9\) The British used a more strident tone in their letters to the Philippine government to compensate for the fact that they were not as influential in Manila as the Americans. Moreover, London exporters did not need to guarantee the quality of abaca they shipped to British manufacturers, while American manufacturers demanded, and got, guarantees from their exporters.\(^9\) When prices fell to their lowest in 1921, Philippine government officials attributed the poor qualities of the UK grades to be a major contributing factor.

The 1921 crash was bad enough that a group of American hemp merchants led by Charles Orth, intent on protecting the price and supply of the higher grades, ended their differences with the Philippine government, and requested the prohibition of lower grades. The move was meant to raise the price of the higher grades preferred by the United States and save the Philippine abaca industry, while the U.K. and European markets were expected to adjust their orders to U.S. standards in the absence of lower grades.\(^10\) Despite opposition from several Philippine abaca dealers and House Speaker Sergio Osmena, who hailed from the hemp-trading port of Cebu, the Bureau of Agriculture issued Administrative Order No. 13 prohibiting the export of coarse low-grade fibers Grades J and below, starting September 1, 1921.\(^11\)

The order proved disastrous. It did real damage to the abaca market by depressing the price of the higher grades as the premium paid for these grades decreased, and forced the British to pay more for their abaca in the form of the higher grades.\(^12\) Nor did it solve the issue of quality for the British trade since the Manila Hemp Association in London continued to complain of unsatisfactory hemp shipments in 1923.\(^13\) And worse, the ill-advised order destroyed the abaca industry in Bicol as farmers shifted to other crops, abandoning abaca altogether, and lowered overall

---

\(^8\) In London, a group of abaca shippers were advocating for a return to the old system of purchasing abaca based on shipper house marks and depend on arbitration when discrepancies arose. A panel of arbitrators was appointed by the Manila Hemp Association to decide on bales that failed to meet specifications, including the amount that needed to be paid by the party responsible for such discrepancies. But other dealers did not agree, considering the return to house marks a retrograde step prone to fraud since there were hundreds of marks of abaca. Those who wanted the uniform government grading to remain insisted that Philippine authorities shape up with regard to reliability and trustworthiness. (H.A. McPherson, “Manila Hemp Association to Its Members, February 2, 1921,” February 2, 1921, 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; Wigglesworth & Co., Ltd., “Wigglesworth & Co., Ltd. to L.H. Dewey, February 7, 1921,” February 7, 1921, 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)
Philippine production levels. After a series of meetings among dealers, planters and government officials, the new administration of Governor General Leonard Wood reinstated the export of lower grades on June 1, 1922, explaining that it was “prejudicial to public interests” to let the low-grade ban continue.

The fiber market began to recover in terms of normal supply and demand in 1922. Sales based on future shipments began to rise that year as the last of the unsold wartime stocks were purchased the year before. While business returned to normal, the abaca trade was no longer the same. After the chaotic post-war years, the surviving merchant houses had to contend with rivals having developed a different business model, namely the vertically integrated agricultural conglomerate. The established merchant houses of Macleod & Co., Smith Bell & Co., Hanson & Orth, Ker & Co., Babcock & Templeton, and W.F. Stevenson & Co. were now joined in the global abaca trade by the Davao-based Japanese plantation companies-cum-trading firms, Ohta Development Company and Furukawa Plantation Company. Some of the merchant firms adapted to market realities by partnering with the new firms. Charles Orth’s New York firm, Hanson and Orth, which opened a Manila branch during the war, opened a Davao branch in the 1920s, and eventually, partnered with the Ohta company for the New York market in the 1930s.

5. Davao’s time: Opportunities in the interwar markets

The depressed global market after World War I enabled Davao to enter the international market as an alternative source of abaca supply. While Bicol and the Visayas shifted production to lower UK grades, abandoned abaca fields, or converted their farms to other crops, Davao plantations were utilizing the cost-effective pakyaw system and spindle machines to strip the medium grades that the U.S. market preferred. From June 1918 to June 1919, Davao achieved the highest average production per hectare at 717 kilos, while Leyte averaged 525 kilos, and Albay 399 kilos per hectare.

The other regions’ abandonment of abaca fields during the period of low prices between 1919 to 1921 meant that normal levels of production in those places did not resume until after 1924, as new plantings of abaca only became productive after several years. The decreased production in the northern provinces provided the
opportunity for Davao to cover the requirement of the U.S. market. The abaca growers of Davao were well-positioned to meet the growing American demand for abaca when mercantile shipping and the U.S. oil industry recovered after 1918, and the markets normalized starting in 1922.¹¹¹

Davao production also benefited from the government’s temporary order to suspend coarse fiber from Class J downwards in 1921. Since Davao produced the mid-ranges G and I, the order did not affect its local industry, but rather stimulated demand for medium grades which the spindle-stripping machines produced. Consequently, Davao production experienced a sustained increase between 1920 and 1924, and was already ranked second in volume by December 1922, with 16,606 bales, behind Leyte’s 30,820 bales, displacing Albay with only 11,405 bales.¹¹²

Davao abaca came of age during a difficult time for the national abaca industry when other countries posed a serious challenge to the Philippine monopoly, and the Depression affected the global economy.¹¹³ The Dutch had established abaca plantations in Sumatra, while the U.S.-administered Panama Canal Zone in Central America also experimented with large-scale abaca production for the Western Hemisphere.¹¹⁴ In the traditional abaca-growing regions of the Philippines, producers responded to the international competition by turning to the government for assistance. Bicol hemp grower and a member of the Fiber Board, Senator Juan Alegre, brushed off competition by stating that the long-established qualities of Philippine abaca would always find a ready market abroad.¹¹⁵ Using their positions in the Philippine Legislature, abaca growers from Bicol and the Visayas sponsored several bills to protect the industry. Some of these new regulations resulted in a ban on the export of abaca seeds and shoots to foreign countries including the United States, and a petition to remove the Fiber Standardization Board in 1932.¹¹⁶

Abaca growers in the northern provinces had long felt the grading standards of the Board were too strict, blaming the Board for their inability to sell more abaca to international markets. Unable to recover from the 1920s crisis, the traditional centers of abaca production were no longer competitive when the Great Depression began.

¹¹¹ The northern provinces produced an increasing percentage of ‘damaged’ or ‘waste’ grades in the mid-1930s. (Mariano Garchitorena, “The Philippine Abaca Industry - Its Problems” (Fiber Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 1938), 16–17.)
With agitated voices, they accused the Board of causing the economic difficulties of those engaged in the hemp business in 1932. Their campaign led to the suspension of government certification of the lower grades from July 1933 to January 1935, during the reorganization of the Fiber Standardization Board. However, the changes did not help the traditional abaca farmers at all. Instead, what occurred was similar to what happened a decade earlier when the government suspended the lower grades. International buyers simply obtained more abaca from Davao, and this time, further consolidated the reputation and position of Davao in the global fiber market as the source of fair-priced, good quality abaca.

Time proved an ally, as Davao’s different responses to competition and economic challenges turned out to be effective. Rather than depend on government support, and at times, in spite of government intervention, Davao producers focused on refining methods of cultivation and perfecting their machines in order to create better quality abaca at lower costs. In 1933, fiber expert Edwards noted in his report that “the center of production of abaca fiber has moved from Southern Luzon and the Visayas to South Mindanao.” By then, Davao produced more than 70 percent of the grades exported to the United States and closely linked the American cordage industry to the Davao abaca industry as never before. Manila hemp had now become synonymous with Davao abaca.

6. Collective undertakings

One of the significant factors for Davao abaca’s success was the cooperation among like-minded planters from the industry’s inception. On an isolated frontier,

---

6 In the words of Fiber expert, H.T. Edwards, the ascendance of Davao in the Philippine abaca industry, “directly affect not only the producers of abaca fiber in the Philippine Islands, but also the manufacturers and consumers of abaca cordage in other countries.” Referring in particular to Davao supplying fiber to the world, “the quality and the cost of high-grade cordage are determined largely by the conditions under which abaca fiber is produced.” (H.T. Edwards, “Report on the Conditions in the Davao Abaca Industry Based on an Inspection Made in Davao Province during the Period from January 13th to 23rd, 1933,” January 1933, 1, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)

7 The Davao abaca industry continued to thrive even in mid-1941, when the United States froze assets of foreigners and tightened international remittances in its territories including the Philippines, as a response to Japanese aggression in mainland Asia. While the order caused confusion in Davao at first, financial transactions straightened after several days, and the operations of Japanese, Chinese and other foreign firms normalized after it was clarified that they fell under an exception to the rule – having established their businesses prior to June 1940. To adjust to government restrictions on remittances, Japanese abaca companies sold their fiber to the local branches of Hanson & Orth, Columbian Rope, International Harvester Company, and other American and Filipino firms. (Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, August 16, 1941,” August 16, 1941; Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, August 23, 1941,” August 23, 1941.)
planters banded together to create a mutual assistance organization to sell their harvests in the overseas market. In February 1905, the Davao Planters Association began selling abaca directly to cordage factories in the United States and England. Association objectives included bypassing middlemen marketing their products, as they were still wary of the role of merchants in the “hemp war” at the turn-of-the-century. A strikingly similar sentiment possessed Association members and Midwest wheat farmers in that period due to their mutual interest in binder twine.

As befits the multinational nature of a resource frontier, the Association counted Americans, Englishmen, Spaniards and Lebanese among its first members. The prominence of the Lebanese Awad and the Saleeby brothers showed the willingness of the planters to work with foreigners, and a testament to the economic power of abaca to transcend national boundaries. The abaca business also compelled Americans who fought in the Spanish-American War to work with Spanish pioneer abaca planters. These early multi-national members of the Association were united by their mission to promote Davao and their new-found industry. There was benefit to be gained from numbers in the creation of a viable abaca industry in Davao. From an initial membership of 15 planters in 1905, the Planters Association grew to 60 by 1909.

Since many plantations sourced finances from partners working for the insular bureaucracy based in Zamboanga or Manila, they formed the Manila-Davao Planters Association in August 1907 for lobbying purposes. This new organization’s objective was to generate support from the government for the development of hemp machines, irrigation, labor supply, and the lease of public lands. Like its sister association in Davao, the Manila chapter was a multiethnic organization that reflected the diverse backgrounds of those who had ownership interests in the Davao abaca plantations. The Manila-Davao Association officers came from three continents. The chairman, Capt. Lewis F. Patstone, was born in Britain and obtained his engineering degree from the U.S. state of Rhode Island. He served in the U.S. Army infantry, became a provost judge, internal revenue inspector and officer in the Philippine Constabulary in Cavite, Iloilo and Nueva Vizcaya. The Association president was the Lebanon-born government official Najeeb M. Saleeby, while board member Amasa S. Crossfield hailed from California. Crossfield was a former customs collector of Cebu and a Judge of the Court of First Instance in Manila.
Through the cosmopolitan composition of their corporate ownership, the Davao abaca plantations linked a Philippine-American frontier to the larger world. Like the provenance of their owners, the places of incorporation of the abaca plantations spanned both sides of the Pacific, and even went across the Atlantic. While many plantations were incorporated in either Manila or Davao, several did so in the United States. The Bulutakai Hemp Company, the first incorporated stock company to operate in Davao, was incorporated in New York.\textsuperscript{130} Organized in California were the Moro Plantation Company, managed by Englishman Frank Crowhurst, and the Mindanao Plantation Company.\textsuperscript{131} The trend of overseas incorporators continued as the Japanese came to play a significant role by 1914, and breathed new life into the cooperative nature of the abaca industry.

There were several Japanese associations established in the early twentieth century. One began in 1907, and another in 1916, but they did not flourish. Several Japanese organizations had occupational status and ethnicity as membership requirements. There was an association of independent cultivators (\textit{jeisha}), as well as an Okinawan Association, among others.\textsuperscript{132} But the biggest organization, the Davao Japanese Association, was established in 1918 and led by officials from the large plantations.\textsuperscript{133} It was formed to protect the interest of Japanese settlers when the land laws became too restrictive. The Davao Japanese Association served its purpose well. In the 1930s, the Association hired lawyers to defend them in the courts and against the Philippine bureaucracy during the period of the ‘Davao Land Problem’ affair.\textsuperscript{134}

Drawing upon the mutual exchange of ideas engendered by the early organizations, the Japanese institutionalized cooperative effort, creating a joint research station in 1927. Led by the two largest Japanese plantation companies in Davao, an experimental station was established on one plantation with a substation located on the other plantation. The experimental stations were open to everyone in the industry, and the Philippine Bureau of Agriculture was invited to collaborate in

---

\textsuperscript{1} The Japanese research stations brought to realization the experimental farm idea of the Davao Planters Association (DPA). As early as 1912, the DPA tried to convince the Moro Province government to run an experimental station that could gather information on abaca and coconut cultivation, as well as other crops that could be grown in Davao. Individual experiments, which many members did on their plantations, were costly and unsatisfactory. The government, however, prioritized an agricultural school for young indigenous boys instead. (H.L. Reynolds, “Davao Planters Association to Gen. Pershing, Jan 7, 1912,” January 7, 1912; John J. Pershing, \textit{My Life before the World War, 1860-1917}, a Memoir, ed. John T. Greenwood, American Warriors (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 306.)
major research schemes. One of their first projects was the utilization of abaca waste as paper material, while another major initiative in the 1930s was the introduction of ramie, another fiber plant, for cultivation in Davao.¹³⁵

Filipino migrants, whose close family support system often precluded the need for such organizations, nonetheless formed associations when circumstances called for the protection of their business interests. For example, public transport operators⁴ organized as a group in the 1920s to lobby the government for the right to charge passengers, while some Filipino landholders⁶ organized themselves for mutual protection at the height of the “Land Problem” in the mid-1930s.¹³⁶ In 1938, Filipinos joined Americans and Japanese in forming a Davao branch of the Rotary Club, a civic-oriented organization promoting fellowship among professionals and businessmen.¹³⁷

With the participation of large numbers of Filipinos in the abaca industry, cooperative associations among Japanese and Filipino laborers and tenants on the plantations were formed to market abaca and secure supplies at bargain prices from importers and wholesalers. These tenant associations were usually small, capitalized between ₱2,000 to ₱3,000 by member contributions. By the mid-1930s, membership in these cooperatives was growing rapidly as their services proved beneficial to members, including the procurement of goods, rice, petroleum and diesel fuel at wholesale prices, and the marketing of hemp through the auction houses.¹³⁸

As an aid to negotiating commodity markets, a marketing cooperative, an offshoot of the Davao Planter’s Association, was formed in 1932 to bring marketing know-how and financial services to its members. The organization disseminated information on global markets and new agricultural methods from other countries. It also offered financial advice and loans to members.¹³⁹ By the 1930s, Davao abaca producers had developed a more nuanced understanding of market movements, and had become more adept at responding to them. Being aware of global market trends was essential in the business of supplying a semi-processed commodity to the world. Nowhere was the character of the market closer to the daily life of the hinterlands than in the auction system. The auction was a method of marketing that emerged

---

³ Discussed in Chapter 6.
⁶ Discussed in Chapter 4.
from collective undertakings in Davao that fulfilled the major goal the Davao Planters Association set in 1905, namely to sell directly to overseas users.

7. The Auction System

The auction system was at the heart of the various associations created in Davao. It developed from the age-old auction method practiced in other global commodity markets, but Davao’s homegrown system was unique in the abaca industry of the Philippines. Set against the background of intermittent complaints from merchants and manufacturers about the poor quality of abaca exported abroad, the auction system addressed such problems. An uncomplicated method of buying and selling was devised that guaranteed quality abaca through a competitive bidding process which worked for the benefit of both buyers and producers.

The auction system was first devised in the mid-1920s by a cooperative association of Japanese tenants from plantations along the Davao River. The auction system spread in popularity and all nationalities involved in the local industry soon adopted it.140 Operated by the Japanese, the auctions occurred on a weekly basis, according to the schedule of each plantation’s hemp stripping, and conducted in the central warehouses of large plantations that functioned as the auction house. Growers brought their abaca to the warehouse on auction day, and merchants and exporters were allowed to inspect the abaca on-the-spot before they put in their bids. The main auction centers were located in the abaca growing districts of Daliaon and Talomo on the coast, and Guianga in the interior.141

The auction process evolved from selling ungraded bundles in the 1920s to the variably graded ones in the 1930s. In its early days, the buyers were principally Chinese dealers who practiced buying “all in,” without grading.142 The Chinese then graded the abaca in their own warehouses before they resold it to interisland merchants. When the port of Davao opened to international trade in 1926, fiber exporters of various nationalities, including Americans, British and Japanese, started to participate in the auctions, with five to six major buyers competing in a typical bid by the late 1920s.143 The auction system benefited foreign buyers because they could source all their requirements from one place, the auction warehouse.144 The auctions became even more beneficial for foreign merchants when plantations began grading their abaca
according to the government standard before selling at auction. The system was also advantageous to producers because they obtained good prices for their abaca without having to search for buyers and also saved on broker fees.

By the 1930s, Japanese-run auctions were well established in Davao and were hailed by participants as fair and efficient since the whole process took less than an hour. The process itself was simple. On auction day, each buyer arriving at the warehouse received a slip of paper that contained information on the abaca to be sold. The buyers inspected the different fibers arranged by lots, bundled according to grade and plantation provenance, with the weight and number of bundles each lot contained indicated on the paper. After examining the lots, buyers wrote down their bids on the paper which they dropped into a box. When all buyers had deposited their slips, the box was opened by the auction manager in the presence of everybody. In a matter of minutes, the auction manager read and checked the bids, and then awarded the sale to the highest bidder. The buyer paid the abaca grower on-the-spot after the award of the bid, completing the sale. The buyer then took possession of the abaca and was responsible for the transfer of the fiber from the auction house to their warehouse.

In most auctions, the “spread,” or the difference between each bid was usually narrow, with a variance of only tens of centavos. Thus, if two bidders wrote the same price, a coin toss settled the matter as to who won the bid. In cases where tenants, and not the landholder, sold abaca at auction, the landholder had the right to buy the abaca at an equal price with the bidders. All sellers had the right to accept or reject the bid prices. Unsold abaca could be stored at the auction warehouses with a corresponding storage charge for up to two weeks.

The auction system was known for the integrity of its sellers. The usual complaints of adulterating parcels by mixing inferior fibers with high-grade ones and hiding rocks in abaca bundles were non-existent in Davao’s auctions. Strict rules kept sellers-growers honest since the local organization holding the auction guaranteed both the weight and quality of the fiber. Each lot had the name of the grower, and if any deficiency was found, the grower was severely penalized. Adulteration in packing the fiber led to a fine of ₱50 for the first offense; confiscation
of the fiber for the second; and if the grower was Japanese, deportation was a real possibility for a third offense.\textsuperscript{157} With such a strong system of regulation in place, even non-Japanese sellers dared not deviate for fear of being blacklisted at the auction house.

The auction enabled the ready conversion of abaca into cash, a system that other abaca-growing regions in the Philippines lacked.\textsuperscript{158} The auction system also enhanced the popularity of the \textit{pakyaw} since landholders and tenants, no matter the size of their plantation, received a steady income from their share in the abaca harvest by participating in the auction. In a place where banks were scarce, the auction system was especially important for small farmers who did not have deep pockets to finance large day-to-day abaca operations. The ready cash-conversion enabled many Davao planters to weather the Great Depression better than their counterparts in the northern provinces.\textsuperscript{1}

Abaca growers, even in the hinterlands, took daily note of the world market prices for abaca. Japanese tenants, Filipino and American plantation owners, and foreign representatives of the export firms, all keenly listened to the radio and read the newspapers for market reports.\textsuperscript{159} Each participant, depending on where one was situated in the global commodity chain, used daily market data to make informed decisions at auction – whether to sell or buy depending on the prevailing price of the fiber. Abaca, as purchased through the Davao auction system, brought the world markets to the hinterlands of Mindanao, and along with it, solutions to the varied challenges posed by the global abaca market.

From its inception, the auction system was widely accepted by Davao growers when it was introduced in the 1920s. This marketing outlet provided a seamless fit for the scientific cultivation and machine-extraction processes used on plantations producing consistent quality abaca. Davao planters did not need to radically change their means of production to meet the strict standards of the auction houses, while their product obtained a ready market. The weekly auctions brought international

\textsuperscript{1} Between 1931 and 1932, during the Great Depression, Davao production only decreased by 12 percent compared to 27 percent in Bicol and 21 percent in Leyte. (Edwards 1933. Report on the Conditions in the Davao abaca industry.)
buyers to the Davao hinterlands, and enabled planters on a Philippine frontier to directly participate in the global commodity market.

2 “Exports and Export Prices of Manila Hemp, Fiscal Years 1899-1912.”
3 Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Murdoch University, 1984), 305.
4 William Redfield, “Commerce Secretary William Redfield to Secretary of War,” January 24, 1919.
9 Ibid., 13–14.
13 Charles Pearce, “C. Pearce to E. Root, March 1, 1901,” March 1, 1901, C-474 Hemp, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
17 Anonymous, “Philippine Hemp: Culture, Manufacture & Statistics,” April 30, 1901, 6, 8.
18 Bennett & Smith, “Bennett & Smith to Hon. Elihu Root, Secretary of War,” January 23, 1903, 845 Hemp, 1898-1914, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
25 Lyster H. Dewey, “Copy of Report of Investigation in Regard to Weak and Imperfect Manila Fiber Received from the Philippines,” December 4, 1903, 2.
26 Ibid., 3.
34 “Memorandum for Colonel Walcutt. Conference on Hemp” (Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, April 24, 1914), 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; McPherson et. al., “Notes of a Meeting between Rope and Twine Manufacturers and Manila Shippers to Consider the Philippine Grading Act” (Minutes of meeting, London, May 20, 1914), 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.
37 H.T. Edwards, "General Order No. 33 of the Bureau of Agriculture" (1914), 4.
53 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
63 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, “Circular to the Hemp Trade, June 4, 1915,” Circular, (June 4, 1915).
71 William Redfield, “Commerce Secretary William Redfield to Secretary of War,” January 24, 1919.
75 Ibid., 1.
76 Ibid., 2.
78 “Fernandez Reveals His Indebtedness to the Bank,” El Debate, August 18, 1923.


86 “National Bank Holds Control of U.S. Hemp.”


91 “Hemp Market Moving Upward.”


96 “Difficult Position in Hemp Market.”


100 Charles Orth, “Charles Orth to McIntyre, March 1, 1921,” March 1, 1921, 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


105 “Ban on Exportation of Low Grade Fiber Withdrawn by Governor as Prejudicial to Public Interests,” Manila Daily Bulletin, June 1, 1922, 845 Hemp Culture, 1914-1945, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


110 “Fiber Production Falling off Considerably,” El Ideal, April 14, 1921.
“Hemp Sales Made at Good Prices.”


Ibid., 69.


Ibid., 73.


Anonymous, “The Port of Davao” (Report, 1930), 4, Series No. 6 Davao Land Cases, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.

J.C. Early, “Memorandum for the Governor General On Davao,” Memorandum, (September 15, 1930), 3, Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.


Ibid.


Ibid., 28.


CHAPTER 6

IN THE HINTERLANDS

1. Taming the world market by mastering science

During the first four decades of the twentieth century, the planters and workers of the Davao hinterlands dealt with two related economic cycles concerning the production and marketing of abaca. The first cycle was about the performance of the fiber in the global market, which determined the decisions of Davao producers of when and how much abaca to plant. World fiber prices inextricably linked abaca producers to the global market, but the stakeholders of the Davao abaca industry had little control over this particular cycle. Consequently, Davao planters and workers primarily focused their attention on the second cycle, which was mastering the knowledge about the cultivation and lifespan of an abaca plant.

Though less complicated than the global trade market, the abaca plant still presented some challenges for its growers. Once planted, cultivators had to nurture an abaca plant through its fifteen-year lifespan in order to optimize their investment. They had to harvest the plant at a certain time, as there were only a limited number of peak harvest years. The plant would one day decline, die, and need to be replaced. These natural factors though, were controllable compared to the abstract principles and workings of market forces. Since harvesting an abaca plant was a steady process during its productive years, growers exerted some control over the production of fiber from its preparation through its extraction. Utilizing the techniques of agricultural science was considered the key to success, and the planters of Davao used scientific knowledge to enhance the production process, and parry the challenges of the world market.

When discharged American soldiers went into the abaca plantation business at the beginning of the twentieth century, they had some scientific information on the Davao environment at their disposal. There were already a few Spanish-owned haciendas planting abaca in Davao, and the crop had also been cultivated by highland tribes and sold to merchants on the coasts of Mindanao since the nineteenth century.\(^1\)
The U.S. Army, following standard practice, recorded temperature and rainfall readings as soon as it arrived in Davao.\(^2\) Thus, when Bureau of Agriculture fiber expert H.T. Edwards conducted his first survey of Davao in 1903, he noted that Davao’s distribution of rainfall, high atmospheric humidity, the lack of heavy winds, and mild temperature, were “extremely favorable for abaca cultivation.”\(^3\)

Edwards’ visit proved a boon for these pioneer planters who believed in employing modern methods of agriculture but were still learning about the science of growing abaca. Not surprisingly, many of these planters were conducting experiments on their plantations to achieve the best results.\(^4\) The fabled weather and the planters’ enthusiasm for new approaches prompted Edwards to state that Davao was “one of the most promising of the abaca-producing provinces,” in his report on the Philippine abaca industry.\(^5\) Edwards’ industry survey was published in the *Official Gazette* in early 1904, and republished in the United States through the *Monthly Summary of Commerce in the Philippine Islands* in the middle of the year.\(^6\) Encouraged by the optimistic news, and by Moro Province Governor, General Leonard Wood, Americans sent representatives to Davao to begin the work “of transforming the wild jungles into productive farms.”\(^6\) By 1908, there were 40 American plantations operating in Davao.\(^7\)

One of the people drawn to Davao’s abaca industry from the United States was Murad M. Saleeby who eventually replaced Edwards as the government’s fiber expert. He was a younger brother of Najeeb M. Saleey, the physician, scholar and government official who came to Davao by way of service in the Moro Province government.\(^8\) In 1907, the brothers entered a partnership with Davao abaca pioneer and fellow Lebanese expatriate, Juan Awad, at Lapanday Plantation, which became Murad Saleeby’s “laboratory” for studies on abaca varieties and their cultivation.\(^9\) A result of Saleeby’s research on the Davao plantation was a revised version of Edward’s 1904 abaca survey, which was published by the Bureau of Agriculture in 1910. In that special issue, Saleeby discussed the different varieties of abaca in detail and revised the estimated income of an abaca plantation more favorably.

---

\(^{\text{A}}\) Edward’s first-hand report on conditions in Davao differed from the prevailing consensus of Luzon as the “most favored island of the archipelago” for abaca production because of its proximity to regular shipping routes, financial centers and markets. (“Philippine Hemp: Culture, Manufacture and Statistics” April 30, 1901, 5, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.)
a. Variety

Saleeby’s contribution to understanding the nature of proper varieties helped improve Davao’s abaca production. In the early 1900s, some planters suffered losses when they started their plantation without prior knowledge of the many varieties of abaca growing in Davao. They had planted varieties which were attractive only on account of their “large plants and excellent appearance,” but not on the basis of the quality of fiber produced. However, by growing many varieties and observing their growth, planters became more familiar with the qualities of various varieties and propagated stock of the superior ones only.

There were fourteen varieties of Davao abaca: Tangongon, Maguindanao, Bongolanon, Libuton, Panucan, Arupan, Puteean, Sinaba, Agutay, Baguisanon Lawaan, Baguisanon, Pulajan, Puspos, and Kawayanon, of which only the first three produced favorable fiber and were planted on a large scale in Davao. In regard to the top three varieties, planters differed in opinion as to their relative value, and each plantation grew its preferred variety. The cultivation of all three varieties around the Gulf of Davao signified that no single variety possessed all the ideal requirements, namely resistance to drought, adaptability to different types of soil, high yield, ease of stripping, early bearing, and a long, productive life. The Tangongon met the first two requirements, the Maguindanao, the third and last, and the Bongolanon, the third and fourth.

The yield of an abaca plant usually resembled a bell curve. Depending on the variety, it became productive after two or three years and reached its peak of productivity between four to six years, after which it began to decline, dying between years ten to fifteen. In the crop’s final years, the whole field was normally cut down, and all suitable stalks were stripped to give way for a new crop. By the early 1920s, many planters chose the fast-bearing but shorter-life Bongolanon variety. The Bongolanon was “rapidly replacing” the Maguindanao because of its early yield rate of two years compared to three for the latter, despite its shorter productive life of 10 years as compared to 15 for the Maguindanao. By 1923, Davao abaca planters, fully aware of the cyclical nature of abaca prices, had become adept at adjusting plantings to the cyclical price trend. They took advantage of the price rise by growing a fast-
maturing variety based upon a cost-benefit analysis of the strategic position of their crop in the global market. By shifting varieties, planters considered it viable to harvest in the second year and replant in the tenth, rather than harvest in the third year and replant in the fifteenth. In purely business terms, planters preferred a strong cash position over accumulated future profit in order to protect themselves from volatile foreign markets.

The decision to prioritize ready cash over future profit proved to be a sound strategy. Davao planters enjoyed the good prices of the mid-1920s, and accumulated enough capital to see them through the depressed years of the early 1930s. With more fields opened and planted to the Bongolanon variety during the early 1920s, overall abaca plantings and production levels grew steadily.\(^{16}\) By 1934, with prices rising, production increased to 508,430 bales (Table 5.3) due to new early harvests from those planted two years earlier, which was the replacement batch for those planted in the early 1920s cycle.

\textbf{b. Soil and location}

During the first decades of the twentieth century, plantations were located along the coast of the Gulf of Davao, radiating north and south from Davao town. Most early plantations spread from the southwestern shores up the east coast of the Gulf, encompassing the Pacific littoral, locating along the coastal wagon trails of southeastern Mindanao. These early plantations planted right on the beaches, following the practice of northern and western Mindanao where abaca was cultivated “to the water’s edge along the coast.”\(^{17}\) However, what Davao planters failed to realize was that abaca grew in other provinces due to the type of soil their coasts possessed. The beaches in northern and western Mindanao had alluvial-origin silt, the result of river overflows with a high percentage of decomposing matter that made it fertile. Davao planters soon learned that their beach lands lacked fertility, and were too exposed to the wind. Consequently, by 1909, most had directed new plantings toward the richer loam of the forested interior instead.\(^{18}\)

Soil type was an important factor in the success of abaca plantations because the plant was grown on the same land without replanting or rotation for up to fifteen years. Thus, the fertility of the soil had to be resilient to withstand the inevitable strain
on its nutrients. The fact that many Davao plantations sprung from virgin forests was an advantage due to the accumulation of humus and soil factors common to newly cleared land. It was fortuitous that the sloping hills of Davao had well-drained soils that met the abaca plant’s need for regular moisture without oversaturation.

In the 1920s, the settlers of Davao considered the deep well-drained reddish volcanic soil of Guianga to be the best. Guianga, located in the hilly northwest interior, had been the site of the Ohta Plantation Company since 1906. By the 1920s, further portions of Guianga’s forests had been transformed into abaca plantations belonging to Bagobo, Visayan, Japanese and other nationalities. Despite the reputation of Guianga in the industry, this did not deter other plantations opening elsewhere, such as Southern Davao Development Company which broke ground in the less-fertile soil of Tagum, so long as they had access to transportation routes.

2. Plantation operations: Mixing local practices with foreign know-how
   a. Breaking ground: Kaingin

After selecting a site and filing the necessary papers for land and forest permits, the planter broke ground by clearing large tracts of jungle through kaingin burning. Enough thicket was left to protect the abaca stalks from strong winds that split their leaves and made them vulnerable to drought. Early American, Spanish and Filipino plantations between 1906 and 1909 had “clearings of forty to eighty acres... surrounded [by] belts of virgin forest.” This field-forest pattern remained the norm into the 1930s when pilots and passengers flying over the province saw below the checkerboard of brownish green abaca and coconut fields interspersed with dark green forests.

Workers commenced clearing the forest early in the year before the onset of the monsoon season. February to May was the ideal kaingin season, when rains were lightest. Heavy downpours not only made it difficult to burn brushwood, but they also made underbrush grow back faster, which slowed down the clearing activity. The battle against the natural elements – the weather and the race to prevent the jungle from reclaiming the land, made breaking and clearing ground the “primary difficulty”

---

9 Post-war, the high quality of the soil in Guianga was verified by a scientific study done in 1949. (Brittain B. Robinson and Falba L. Johnson, Abaca: A Cordage Fiber, Agriculture Monograph 21 (Beltsville, Maryland: United States Department of Agriculture, 1953), 24.)
for all prospective agricultural enterprise in the Philippines. Due to the heavy precipitation prevalent in densely forested areas, two and even three burnings were advised by government experts to clear the land.

Due to the heavy precipitation prevalent in densely forested areas, two and even three burnings were advised by government experts to clear the land.

![Kaingin image][1]

**Fig. 6.1.** *Kaingin.* Shrubs and branches stacked to burn in a new clearing. Courtesy of the Carl E. Guthe Collection.

However, many plantations in Davao cleared the land in just one burning to save on time and labor costs. In January and February, plantation workers cleared the undergrowth, felled and trimmed trees, and scattered branches on the ground. Workers waited six weeks for the roughly cut trees and branches to dry before burning them in March and April. A slow-burning fire was set to consume all branches on the ground in order to avoid a second burning. Unburned logs and stumps were left to decay, which normally happened within three to four years. By avoiding a second burning, planting commenced in June, in time for the monsoon season.

---

*C* Aside from jungles, *cogon* grasslands, were another challenge to clear. *Cogon* was cleared by burning the ground, and then running a plow over the burnt ground. *Cogon* grew back faster than felled trees. As a result, cleared *cogon* fields required a shorter window of time to plant abaca suckers, and more maintenance work to cut the grass. Otherwise, the hemp’s maturity was considerably slowed down.

Similar to the impacts of *kaingin* practiced by the Bagobos in their swiddens, plantation *kaingin* not only cleared the forest, it also cleared the ground of weeds and left a fair amount of potash which furnished fertilizing material. Indigenous tribes generally cleared the tropical forest during the early years, but as more migrants came to Davao in the second decade, Visayans took up such labor-intensive tasks on many plantations, while Muslim laborers did so on others.

The physical act of clearing the jungle was a significant accomplishment. The feat signified the pioneer ethos – of a man overcoming the wilderness and creating a frontier. Physically demanding, pitting man and his simple tools and means against the power of nature, the act of clearing tropical forests was a cause of admiration for those who witnessed it.

The clearing of the forest with the primitive implements at his command is no light undertaking for the native. The giant trees must be felled by hand by means of an ax. A frail platform of bamboo is erected to the point in the tree hole where the internal growth is uniform – sometimes 15 feet from the ground. Two men climb to the platform and opposite sides of the tree begin wielding their axes in rhythmic strokes. In an incredibly short time, 20 to 30 minutes, the incision is completed and 80 or 100 feet of magnificent forest growth lies on the ground. So expertly do the natives gauge their blows that the trunk seems almost to have been sawed thru instead of chopped.

When the trees have been felled the plot is burned over, the residue greatly enriching the already fertile soil. We saw many logs and stumps still smoldering after several weeks. This clearing is called a *caingin*.

Many settlers who opened the jungles of Davao preferred simple tools because they were inexpensive and light enough to be carried into the interior where there were no roads. The pioneering scene described above occurred in the foothills of Mt. Apo in the early 1930s and was typical of the lands cleared by Filipino homesteaders with little capital. In 1909, an American planter’s pipe dream was to use steam-powered donkey engines, which were clear-felling the giant redwood forests of Washington State at that time, to clear the Davao jungles. But since a donkey engine cost ₱5,000.00, the amount was prohibitive for under-capitalized Davao plantations.

That mechanized dream however, finally became a reality in the late 1920s, when the International Harvester Company ventured into abaca production in Davao and provided a perfect example of how machines could be used to clear their 2,300-
hectare plantation. McCormick-Deering tractors equipped with Log Skidders, Stump Pullers, and Bush Breakers cut trees and heavy underbrush, while Bay City Dredges with McCormick Deering engines dug ditches towards the sea. Tractors plowed through mud to lay tracks and dragged construction supplies on sleds when roads were nonexistent. Nevertheless, human labor was still crucial in opening such land. It was the skilled worker with his ax that cut down the largest trees and thus paved the way for the tractors to go to work. After the tractors departed and the fires were extinguished, it was still man’s labor that dug out the remaining scrub left on the ground.38

b. Planting

All plantations aimed to open as large an area as possible to maximize profits, but due to lack of laborers or market conditions, many owners only cleared a small portion of their total land per year.39 Clearings had to be planted within several months to prevent the land from reverting to the wilderness again.40 Plantations created schedules to determine the location and size of annual clearing activities, according to available labor and financial resources.41 For example, the Wilson Plantation Company, founded in 1906, had only one-fourth of its total 672 hectares under cultivation by 1909, owing to scarcity of labor. While the Southern Davao Development Company, which applied for a lease in 1920, had only forty percent of its 1,000 hectares cultivated by 1925 due to the “economic chaos” after the First World War.42

In the first decade of the twentieth century, labor shortage was the greatest obstacle confronting planters in clearing their land. Plantations usually planted to the extent their labor supply could maintain in the initial phase, then made subsequent plantings according to labor availability.43 The planting schedule of Southern Cross Plantation Co. (Table 6.1) in its early years of existence illustrates the variable planting pattern prevalent towards the end of the first decade:

---

38 The 2,300 hectares of land was more than the 1,024-hectare limit in the land laws, but this was made possible by having three separate title applications for three adjacent tracts of land. (Walter Robb, “Odell Abaca Plantation,” American Chamber of Commerce Journal, November 1931, 19.)
In the 1920s, when more laborers were available due to the *pakyaw* arrangement, the method for clearing land and designing plantations became more systematic. Clearing and planting activities now often followed a topographic blueprint of the plantation subdivided into ten-hectare lots with roads. The roads were usually two meters wide, large enough for a cart or pass along, and the lots had assigned names or numbers for better management. On the completion of the roadworks, which also created the ten-hectare subdivisions, each block had its assigned group of workers who cleared and planted hills of abaca, making the entire area operational.

The first task undertaken on a cleared field was to plant the suckers, the bulbous rootstock of a mature abaca plant. Sharpened sticks were used to dig holes 10 centimeters deep, and the bulb was placed in the hole and covered with top soil. These suckers were planted in straight rows three meters apart to allow plows and disc harrows to be used to prevent weed growth. This spacing system was first employed in Burchfield’s plantation in the early 1900s, and was still utilized as late as the 1920s. Burchfield’s row distance was changed by the Japanese in the 1920s, when they introduced the double-row system, enabling rapid replanting. In this new system, the two rows of plants, diagonal to each other were two-and-a-half meters apart, but

### Table 6.1

*Southern Cross Plantation Co. Planting Schedule, 1907-1908*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>No. of hills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June-July 1907</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1907</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November-December 1907</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1908</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1908</td>
<td>10,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1908</td>
<td>3,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1908</td>
<td>7,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total planted</strong></td>
<td><strong>71,513</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
between each pair (or double-row), was a five-meter space planted to leguminous crops. The two-meter space between the rows enabled the immediate planting of new suckers when the abaca in the original double row reached the end of its lifespan, and thus prevented operating fields from becoming fallow.52

c. Disease and maintenance

There was another benefit derived from planting in straight rows; it enabled supervisors to observe workers from one end of the row to the other, even in fields that stretched for hundreds of meters. Visitors to Davao plantations in the 1930s were greeted by the sight of workers in light-colored clothes methodically cutting the abaca stalks for stripping in well-laid out fields, with the ubiquitous foreman not far behind.53 This well-regulated maintenance was a consequence of the spread of abaca diseases during the late 1920s, threatening the whole industry.

Historically, diseases were non-existent in the annals of abaca-growing in past centuries.54 However, the large number of abaca fields in cultivation by the twentieth century, and the neglect of some of these fields in Luzon during the 1920s led to an outbreak of pests and diseases that was heretofore unknown.55 In the 1930s, these diseases reached Davao through shipping routes, prompting strict quarantine measures on plantations. Davao’s stringent measures were absolutely necessary since diseases “practically eliminated” the abaca industry of Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas in the 1930s.56

There were a series of reports of outbreaks of abaca diseases in Davao starting in 1931, with an account that 1,776 hills out of 13 million, were affected by bunchy top, a virus transmitted by an aphid.57 In 1932, some 2.5 million hills incurred an infestation of pagui-pagui, a type of caterpillar. While in 1939, vascular wilt, labeled a “new” disease, hit abaca grown in high altitude locations.58 Plantations were quick to take countermeasures such as burning the infected plants, spraying soap solution and dispersing anti-parasites.59 When the pagui-pagui infestation occurred, plantations collected the larvae of the insect and sent them to the government’s Division of Plant Sanitation to study the pest.60

As outbreaks were reported in different parts of the Philippines, the quarantine and maintenance regimes of Davao plantations became even more stringent. Japanese
plantations became known for their “clean method” which was deemed “too strict” by their workers.\(^{61}\) Thus, while workers in Bicol only cleared the surroundings of the plants to be stripped, in Davao, workers “meticulously cleared off all extraneous wild plants and shrubs” in all areas of the plantation.\(^{62}\) During the mid-1930s, the measures taken at the Furukawa Plantation were as follows:

Workers shed their clothes and donned company uniforms on arriving at the plantation. Before they entered the fields, they were sprayed with insecticide to ensure they did not bring aphids or other disease-bearing insects into the plantation. The workers each carried two “bolos”: one for trimming the healthy plants, the other for cutting down the diseased ones. They were admonished never to confuse the two... If they found a diseased plant, the workers cut it down, dug out the roots and buried the plant immediately. In the middle of the rows of abaca they laid down leaves as mulch. The planted areas were so clean ... that you could see a ‘needle on the ground.’\(^{63}\)

*Limpisadors* or “cleaners” maintained the grounds by clearing the field of weeds and covering the ground with old cuttings from abaca plants to provide mulch to fertilize the soil.\(^{64}\) Weeding was done every three months after planting, although one planter claimed that cleaning up every month was more economical than the usual quarterly weeding.\(^{65}\) For practical reasons, most plantations adjusted the frequency of weeding to the size of their labor force. In mechanized plantations, tractors usually replaced *limpisadors* three to four years after clearing, when left over logs had decayed, and tractors could go over the fields with a plow with blades six-inches wide.\(^{66}\)

d. Harvesting and methods of fiber extraction

Despite being done separately and by different workers, harvesting the stalks and extracting the fiber were complimentary tasks. Harvest and fiber extraction were carried out within a 48-hour period to avoid getting a ‘damaged’ grade.\(^{67}\) Within this brief time frame, the mature stalk had to be lopped\(^e\) off the abaca plant with a bolo, ripped for *tuxies*,\(^f\) and the *tuxies* then stripped into individual fibers.\(^{68}\) The commercial abaca fiber was the end product produced after feeding the *tuxies* through the stripping apparatus.\(^{69}\)

\(^e\) The act of chopping down the stalk was called “tumbling” which referred to stalks being tumbled down with the bolo.
\(^f\) *Tuxies* were ribbon-like fibers slit from the outer sheath of a stalk by a sharp bone-wedged tool. (Mabel Cook Cole, *Savage Gentlemen* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1929), 218.)
In a departure from the prevailing method in other regions of scattering strippers over a field, a Davao plantation in Padada pioneered a systematic method of harvesting whereby different groups of workers did specific tasks, and centralizing stripping in one spot. A group of workers, called *fellers*, chopped the stalks. Another group, the *tuxeros* extracted the *tuxies* on the field where the stalk was cut. Then a third group loaded the *tuxies* into wagons that took them to a centrally located stripping shed. However, not all plantations adopted the centralized process due to difficulty in transporting the heavy stalks. The problems of transportation and “centralization” became more pronounced as the size of abaca fields increased with periodic expansion. Consequently, as Davao plantations experimented with diverse methods of extraction, levels of task differentiation and degrees of stripping centralization likewise became more varied.

Three methods of fiber extraction developed in the Davao plantations: by hand with a simple contraption, by use of a portable semi-automatic machine, or by utilizing a large automatic decorticating machine. The type of stripping apparatus largely determined the rate of fiber extraction.

i. **Manual method**

The early plantations in Davao utilized a simple contraption similar to the device used in the older abaca-growing regions on Luzon and the Visayas. This type of apparatus consisted of

a log set in a horizontal position 1 or 2 feet from the ground. On top of this is fastened a block of smooth, hard wood. Over this block is placed a bolo having a blade about 1-foot long and a handle 1 ½ feet long. A rattan is attached to the end of the knife handle and connected with a bamboo spring above. Another rattan passes from the handle to a foot treadle. The bamboo spring holds the knife down upon the block, its pressure being easily regulated by lengthening or shortening the rattan. By means of the foot treadle, the operator raises the knife when he desires to insert or remove a strip of fiber.

While Davao and other Philippine provinces used a similar apparatus, the labor arrangement in Davao were different. Instead of employing a single person to do the *tuxying* and stripping, Davao plantations employed a gang of strippers under the supervision of a foreman-harvester. The group produced a minimum of 10 kilos of fiber a day and received remuneration for every kilo they cleaned. The strippers did
the job of tuxying, or had tuxeros for assistants. Tuxying was done in the morning, followed immediately by stripping the tuxies. Strippers were known for their strength because pulling the tuxies was an arduous job. Fifteen strippers were under the supervision of a foreman who also did the harvesting, and was thus called the harvester. In this labor set-up, the harvester-foreman was in-charge of cutting mature stalks, as the “fellers” did on the early plantations. But by the 1920s, harvesters were differentiated from the foremen, and were “trained men” who knew by sight when to cut a particular stalk off the abaca plant.

ii. Semi-automatic method and the hagotan

The second method of stripping was using a semi-automatic machine. Such a machine was born out of the specific needs of the Davao abaca industry. Since the early days of Davao, with labor costs a major consideration, industry players understood the importance of eliminating hand stripping if they were to establish profitable plantations. Several prototype stripping machines were fabricated by planters and mechanics around Davao with the aim of creating an affordable and portable machine that could strip clean fiber. The result of these experimental efforts, often in competition with one another, was the development of a semi-automatic spindle machine called the hagotan. These spindle machines were used by the majority of Davao plantations, with a 1928 report estimating 75 percent of Davao fiber output was produced using such machines.

There were many versions of the hagotan, but they all had certain elements in common: special knives attached to a metal and timber frame with a cylindrical spindle powered by a small engine. The basic difference between the manual contraption and the spindle machine was the engine, which made pulling the tuxies under the knife less arduous. Hagotans were adaptable since different types of knives for different grades could be attached to produce “excellent quality” abaca. They were portable enough to be disassembled and taken to a field where it was needed and re-assembled there. Its portability was especially important in abaca fields where roads were not built yet or were located in difficult terrain.

---

Technically speaking, the term “hagotan” referred to any abaca stripping apparatus. It used to refer to the manual abaca stripping contraption, but as the apparatus evolved into the semi-automatic version by the 1920s, it also came to refer to the new machines.
Fig. 6.2. A battery of hagotans at work. Courtesy of the Frank Family Papers.  

Costing as little as ₱450 in the mid-1930s, hagotans were inexpensive, and many cash-strapped farmers could even rent one based on a percentage of harvest. This allowed plantations with as few as 2,000 hills of abaca, or two hectares of land, to rent a hagotan at the cost of 10 percent from the sale of its abaca. Its affordability also complemented the pakyaw arrangements, and together, the hagotan and the pakyaw enabled those with limited funds to enter the abaca industry.

Benefiting a plantation’s bottom line, the motorized hagotan reduced the number of strippers required to produce the same amount of fiber with a manual contraption. Only two strippers worked the machine, one feeding the stalk, and another, the birador, pulling the stalk out. The act of stripping became less strenuous and faster, thereby increasing the volume of fibers cleaned in a day. For example, on a 10-hectare lot under a pakyaw arrangement, a foreman supervised five laborers working together as a gang who did everything from tumbling to stripping. This team usually stripped an average of 2 piculs daily and took up to 40 working days to strip the mature stalks from 10,000 hills during a quarterly harvest period. In a year, they produced 240 to 320 piculs of clean fiber.
The number of stripping machines depended on plantation size. For small plantations, one *hagotan* with a 1.5-horsepower motor was enough.\(^9^2\) While larger plantations, on the other hand, were known to have ten *hagotans* powered by a single 35-horsepower motor in the stripping shed.\(^9^3\) In the Ohta Development Company, an employee generated power for twelve *hagotans* by connecting the machines to a water turbine in a nearby river.\(^9^4\)

iii. **Fully-automatic method**

![Fig.6.3](image)  
*Fig.6.3.* A fully-automatic stripping machine, the Behrendt, operating in Davao. Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.\(^9^5\)

While the hand apparatus produced just 10 kilos of fiber per day, and the semi-automatic *hagotan* yielded 120 kilos a day, they were both eclipsed by the automatic decorticating machine that could produce up to 1,440 kilos a day.\(^9^6\) One such machine, the No. 321 Prieto, produced 3,268 bales (approx. 393,000 kilos) of fiber a year.\(^9^7\) However, despite the advantages of stripping more fiber in less time, the automatic machines were not widely used on the Davao plantations. One major reason was the price. A Prieto machine cost ₱7,600 in 1917, and a Corona model sold for as much as ₱60,000 in the 1930s.\(^9^8\) Moreover, shipping such heavy machines manufactured abroad added additional cost to the price of landing one in Davao. One such machine had to be packed in 27 boxes, weighing 27,610 pounds, and was double-
shipped, from New York to San Francisco before making the transpacific voyage to the Philippines. The large capital outlay for these machines meant that only a few large well-funded plantations could afford them.

In the early 1930s, there were only two plantations, the Furukawa Plantation Company, and the Odell Plantation, an International Harvester-connected company, that utilized the fully-automatic stripping method. These two plantations first experimented with fiber-cleaning machines used by sisal plantations in Mexico in the late 1920s, then went on to use other machines of similar type by the mid-1930s. Nonetheless, the volume of fiber these plantations produced was large enough to warrant the government creating a new Fiber grade for them, the ‘Deco.’

The size and weight of these automatic machines, built of iron and steel, made them stationary, and determined the delivery of all abaca harvests to one central location. This fully centralized model necessitated the creation of a railway system that transported abaca stalks from the field to the decorticating plant. But, despite the “first really up-to-date” method of stripping fiber in the Philippines, labor arrangements were no different from those used for the semi-automatic hagotan. Strippers were still organized in gangs as they trundled 4-foot stalks into the automatic feeder as fast as possible.

**e. Drying and baling**

All stripped fibers were dried upon large bamboo or wire racks in open spaces near the stripping shed, resembling a laundry scene. It took half a day to dry stripped fiber during good weather, so workers usually stripped fiber to hang in the morning and checked for dryness in the afternoon. Dried fibers were then tied into hanks or bundles, ready for baling. In Lais Plantation, all hanks in storage were gathered every Monday morning and weighed, examined, then baled according to government standards. Bales were labeled with a tag bearing the plantation name and the corresponding government grade.

---

This method usually caused delay and in certain cases, fiber discoloration, during the rainy season. Consequently, some plantations constructed long open sheds with galvanized iron wires to hang fiber during a rainstorm. (H.T. Edwards and M.M. Saleeby, “Abaca (Manila Hemp),” Department of the Interior, Bureau of Agriculture, Farmer’s Bulletin, 1910, 32.)
Depending on their location, various modes of transportation were used by plantations in getting their bales to market. For fields in the remote hinterlands that had no roads, bales were carried by cargadores, either with or without help from horses and carabaos. Certain inland plantations traversed by rivers used small bancas to ferry bales down to the coast, while on plantations that had access to roads, the bales were packed into machine or animal-drawn wagons, or loaded into motor trucks. One plantation, the Odell at Madaum, even moved its bales by rail from the warehouse to waiting barges at the plantation pier.

3. Life in the hinterlands
   a. Earning a living

Migrants came from various parts of the archipelago and region to work on the hinterland plantations of Davao. They were people like Carmen Marinay, who arrived in 1920 after being recruited in Cebu to work as a sacada on an abaca plantation owned by settlers from Luzon. Others, like the Navarra family from Iloilo, who arrived in 1928, were prompted by visiting relatives who told them that there was plenty of work available in Davao. Their migration stories were similar to the Okinawan laborers whom these Filipinos worked alongside in the Davao plantations.
The Okinawans also heard such tales about economic opportunities in Davao, and many were recruited as laborers.\textsuperscript{114}

Scores of these newly arrived Filipino and Okinawans started out as entry-level limpisadors. Ilocano migrants in the early 1930s found such jobs in Madaum, northern Davao, while Visayan migrants were given the same tasks in Pantukan to the east, earning from ₱0.50 to ₱0.70 a day.\textsuperscript{115} Filipinos often received training in how to use the hoe to weed since they were not familiar with such an implement.\textsuperscript{116} They were promoted to higher paying jobs after demonstrating their capability for hard work and after becoming familiar with plantation operations.

The next likely job was that of tuxero.\textsuperscript{1} Tuxeros were paid ₱0.80 to ₱1.00 a day in the 1930s for extracting the ribbon-like tuxies from the outer layer of the harvested stalks.\textsuperscript{117} Unlike the limpisadors who went into the fields clearing the weeds, tuxeros sat on the ground peeling the tuxies from the stalks with their specialized knife. It took skill to peel away just the thin outer layer, and not include the sheath which was commercially useless. In doing their work, tuxeros had to deal with the sticky sap that stained their hands and clothes black.\textsuperscript{118}

With further experience and a good eye, a tuxero could become a harvester. In most plantations, harvesters equaled the pay of strippers, with both estimated to earn from ₱0.80 to ₱1.20 a day in 1934.\textsuperscript{119} In pakyaw contracts, both workers received as much as fifty percent of the abaca proceeds.\textsuperscript{120} Compared to the strippers, harvesters were few in number because it only took one person to chop the number of stalks that five or more strippers could clean. Harvesters were crucial to the process of producing consistent quality fiber, and valued for their ability to spot a mature stalk. It was a trait obtained only after years of experience in the abaca fields since a mature plant had as many as twenty different stalks of varying size and height, with only certain stalks mature enough at certain points in time.\textsuperscript{121} The harvester had to balance a plant’s present condition and future costs. To do so, he must choose a stalk, not over-ripe, nor too young, which could affect the future productivity and monetary return of the plant.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{1} Some writers spelled the word as tacsero.
Then, there was the stripper. Found under the stripping shed and operating the *hagotan*, his was the most visible job on the Davao plantations. The stripper’s role was important to fiber production since the quality of stripping determined its grade. Because the *hagotan* usually produced higher-grade quality fiber, strippers were responsible for turning the stalk into a spun fiber “gold.” For this reason, strippers often eclipsed other workers in status on the plantation. Even industry insiders, merchants and landholders, when discussing plantation workers, usually divided them into two types: strippers and the others.

Naturally, plantation workers aspired to be strippers. Okinawan immigrants often looked at cutting and cleaning tasks as a means of obtaining a coveted stripping job, which they considered the most skilled work on the plantation. It was an attainable job, due to the volume of abaca produced in Davao and the consequent need for strippers. Many strippers were Filipino, working for Filipino landholders or Japanese plantations. In 1928, when total abaca production in the province increased by more than 200,000 piculs from the previous year, a Filipino stripper working in one of the big Japanese plantations in Guianga received ₱1.50 per day.
Strippers’ salaries remained unchanged even in 1930, at the height of the Great Depression, when total Davao volume sustained a 43,000-picul year-on-year increase.

**Fig.6.6.** Strippers with their *hagotan* on trailer-truck beds for better mobility, 1927.

Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.\(^{128}\)

In cases where labor arrangement was based on a share of the abaca harvest, such as those individuals in *pakyaw* agreements, strippers received from 32 percent to 50 percent of the proceeds of the harvest.\(^{129}\) The percentage of sharing in *pakyaw* contracts varied depending on other amenities provided by the plantation, with the share of the strippers usually being higher in smaller plantations that did not provide housing or health care as compared to the larger plantations.

All the workers, including *limpisadors*, *harvesters* and strippers, were supervised by the plantation foreman. The foreman was the highest paid employee on the plantation, usually earning ₯2.00 per day or an equivalent of ₯35 a month in 1934.\(^{130}\) While some Filipino landholders, especially in *pakyaw* arrangements, employed Japanese known for their hard work and trustworthiness, hiring a Filipino foreman, locally known as *capataz*, was also a common practice.\(^{131}\) One such case involved Sanama, a Muslim resident of Tagum hired as *capataz* between 1920 and 1930, who supervised as many as 20 workers. His employer, Maria Aguipo, was a Christianized
indigenous woman, on whose land he and his group of workers opened, planted and stripped some 39,000 hills of abaca.\footnote{132} His salary and the number of laborers working for him varied according to the annual phase of plantation operations. When they were still opening the land, he was paid ₱60 a month, and when they were harvesting and stripping abaca, he received ₱100 monthly.\footnote{133}

b. Finding contentment on a far-flung frontier

In the 1930s, observers from Manila noted the contrast between the contented Davao agricultural workers and the restive peasants of Luzon who were organizing against unjust tenancy conditions.\footnote{134} Similarly, recollections of former laborers on Filipino, American and Japanese plantations during that period describe their lives as “simple and peaceful.”\footnote{135} The absence of multi-national worker conflicts in a remote hinterland, especially during a time of political agitation against the Japanese by nationalist politicians was, in large measure, due to the nature of plantation life on the Davao hinterlands.

The remote location of the Davao plantations shielded workers from the politics of Manila and to a lesser extent, Davao town. In the hinterlands, the primary concern of the people was earning a living, and it was a life well-compensated. Aside from good pay, work itself was a source of satisfaction, and organization into gangs encouraged cooperation among workers despite performing specialized tasks. Many gangs with seasoned workers allowed rotation of tasks in tuxying, stripping and drying, and divided the payment equally among its members, lessening feelings of injustice among them.\footnote{136} Since gangs were responsible for a specific field – whether a ten-hectare block or a five-hectare homestead – abaca workers had a sense of accomplishment and ownership due to their work.

The various levels of work and the prospects of promotion on a plantation meant neophytes could always look forward to better tasks and improved pay and conditions over the years. The upward social mobility that many migrants experienced while working in the plantations affirmed their choice to migrate to Davao to fulfill their goals. For example, Felimon Egos, who left Bohol because he could not find work there, found an entry-level job as a limpisador on a Davao plantation, and within two years he became a well-paid harvester.\footnote{137} Okinawan migrants, after they had
demonstrated their abilities in cutting grass and cleaning stalks, were also often happy to be promoted to strippers.138

Just having a job was not enough for many Filipino workers. They were daily reminded by the wilderness surroundings of the plantations that they could become abaca growers by applying for public land.139 It helped that some plantation owners included an option for workers to acquire their own farms, like Montano Vargas, a self-made Filipino planter, who made such an offer to his contract workers from Iloilo.140 Workers obtaining their own landholdings were not uncommon in particular parts of Davao. Migrant workers in the Padada Valley and Pantukan acquired landholdings near the plantations they worked.141 Even an Iloilo migrant who worked on a small Tagum homestead was able to purchase his own land near the homestead he worked for many years.142 In a developing agricultural economy, no asset was as valuable as a plot of land, and these migrant abaca workers had managed to succeed.

c. Other plantation concerns

While abaca was king in Davao, it was by no means the only crop grown on the plantations. Abaca plantations experimented with other types of plants for propagation purposes. Since the early 1900s, plantations that grew abaca also cultivated coconuts, rubber varieties, American and Australian forage plants, pineapples, lemons, and even spices from India.143 Japanese plantations pioneered in ramie, a textile fiber crop, and Filipino plantations also grew the crop in the 1930s.144 A number of American plantations that cultivated coconuts on an experimental basis later diversified and made coconuts a secondary crop, while there were those that made a complete shift to coconuts replacing abaca as their cash crop.145

On abaca plantations, a standard practice was to grow intercrops alongside the abaca to protect it from the sun, wind and weeds. Intercrops such as corn, rice, mango, mangosteen, beans, tobacco, indigo, kapok and tapioca proved beneficial not only for the abaca plants, they also reduced expenses for food and material supplies.146 Food intercrops augmented the diet of plantation workers, while non-food plants were used for household needs. One useful intercrop was kapok, a filling for mattresses since the Spanish period.147 The Ohta plantation even had a kapok orchard to supply its hospital beds.148
Since abaca was a non-food crop, providing regular food supplies for the plantation community was a major consideration on many plantations. Food preparation varied from plantation to plantation. While there were some places that did not provide cooked meals, others supplied a breakfast of hot rice and fish for workers. A plantation in Padada cooked rice for its workers in a big kawa covered by a wooden lid to complement the home-brought meals workers carried in small timbreras or in cleaned kerosene cans. Some plantations formed workers’ cooperatives where rice could be bought through cash or credit. One Guianga plantation, aiming for variety and self-sufficiency, had a fishpond and a kangkong marsh as additional food sources for its workers. The facility was taken care of by the wives of some workers, who brought home for free the “rejects” which they cooked for the family.

Outside of the plantation, there were many ways that workers and their families sourced their own food. Throughout Davao, workers’ houses had fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and poultry. In Guianga, Cebuano plantation workers, Narciso and Benedicta Lapaza, planted durian trees beside their house, while mangoes, papayas and melons were the fruits of choice in the garden plots of workers in Madaum. Similarly, Okinawan housewives living on scattered farm plots throughout the province, kept vegetable gardens and raised chickens and pigs to feed their families. Backyard gardening received a boost in the early 1930s when Governor General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. encouraged Filipinos to spend part of their daily time maintaining one.

**d. Home on the frontier**

As an industry situated on a frontier with some plantations over a thousand hectares in size, and others consisting of just a five-hectare farm, nearby accommodation for laborers was important. In the early 1900s, American planters worked with the colonial government to create indigenous villages of sufficient size near plantation sites to ensure a steady labor supply. Whole groups of tribal people were persuaded to move near plantations with the promise of food, clothes, shelter, and protection from their enemies, in exchange for their labor. By 1910, a Padada plantation sourced workers from three nearby villages, comprising five hundred people from various tribes; each village created as a virtual replica of their former
homes in the hills. These workers were also encouraged to plant abaca and other crops in their village plots.

Planters constructed their own homes within plantation grounds using timber cut during clearing and building materials purchased in Davao town. American planters often adopted the Visayan open verandah design, which let the air in and kept the sun and rains out. Following Filipino tropical architecture, the living areas were usually elevated, and some houses had separate quarters for the kitchen which was joined to the main house by a porch passage. Some plantations ascribed to a manorial style by locating the owner’s house on a hill where the individual could view the fields below, while other plantation houses were more functional, being situated in the fields with the plantation store downstairs.

Staff houses for workers were also built on plantation grounds, especially when free housing became a condition in the worker’s contract after 1910. Opening plantations required identifying certain types of trees for housing and furniture construction. The laborers’ quarters were some of the first structures to be built, after the administration building, when establishing a plantation. Bachelor workers stayed in dormitories called camarins, although a single-male worker could live in a separate shed if others refused to live with him. Married workers, who brought their families, lived in plantation staff houses until they moved to houses built on land they applied for, usually within walking distance of the plantations where they worked.

Houses on family-operated abaca farms in the hinterlands were built almost entirely from forest resources. In 1905, a frontier house had thatched nipa roofing, unhewn Molave timber posts that raised it off the ground, and beams joined by rattan vines, instead of nails. Its ladder, made of wood held together by rattan vines, differentiated it from indigenous houses that often had notched poles for steps. The walls were woven nipa and bamboo, and the floor was made of split palma brava sticks designed half an inch apart to let dirt fall through easily to the soil below. By the 1930s, a Visayan migrant’s two-bedroom house near the abaca fields of Malita utilized nipa, palma brava and bamboo materials, but also used nails instead of rattan. Slight changes could be seen later in the decade, with a Luzon migrant’s house using nails and galvanized iron for roofing, but still retaining palma brava for the
floors and walls. These traditional types of building materials were not only utilized by Filipinos, as Okinawan farm houses were also built from similar materials of wood, metal and thatched nipa.

In terms of utilizing space, most frontier families shared their house with aspects of the abaca production process. A frontier house belonging to a well-off Christianized indigenous family in the early 1900s had an open plan where stripped abaca fiber ready for market was stored in one corner of the house. In the same space devoted to the abaca bundles, the household cooked and ate during the day, and slept on mats and blankets during the night. In the 1930s, a Visayan family however, lived on the upper floor of the house, while the space downstairs was where the father and elder son worked on the hagotan during the day. Okinawan families also had a similar living arrangement where their living quarters were situated on the upper level, and stripped abaca was stored below. Their hagotan however, was located in a nearby shed of its own called the makina goya.

Houses on the frontier relied on the natural world for their daily supply of water. Streams provided a place for bathing, and they were a source of water for the household, often using a five-foot-long bamboo tube opened at one end and carried by the “shoulder arm” between the stream and the house. When galvanized iron became readily available in the 1920s, plantation houses used rain tanks to store water. Edward Christensen built a filtration system that had rainwater pass through four feet of sand and gravel before it entered the tanks, making rainwater safe for drinking. At the Odell Plantation in the 1930s, each staff house had a metal tank holding a potable water supply of 500 liters. However, even then, many houses, especially in remote areas, still used wells for daily needs. In 1939, 14,000 families, or a quarter of the provincial households, had water tanks, another quarter used surface wells, and less than a tenth were connected to a piped water system.

e. Passing time

Due to their relative isolation, plantation homes were known for their hospitality. In a place where no hotel was nearby, “every planter’s home [was] a hostelry.” Filipino and Spanish families were noted for their hospitality, and American planters followed this tradition in the spirit of good neighborliness, due to
their limited number. Americans mostly mixed with themselves, often having dinner at each other’s houses. When the social occasion called for it, they even had a baile, a dance party common in the Philippines. They organized such parties through the telephone network that connected the coastal plantations. One such baile was held to celebrate the wedding anniversary of visiting anthropologist Fay-Cooper Cole and his wife Mabel. Palm leaves, flowers and paper lanterns decorated the plantation house while the phonograph played German classical music. When the instrument ran out of records to play, a plantation “orchestra” serenaded the guests over duck dinner finished off with a special cake sent eleven kilometers on horseback by a neighbor. After dinner, the “orchestra” moved with the guests to the plantation schoolhouse which doubled as a venue for the dance.

Notwithstanding the small size of their homes, hospitality was a trait Filipino settlers carried with them to the frontier. They displayed this trait even to passing strangers. When the American missionary Walter Tong and Filipino school teacher Crispin Faune trekked through the foothills of Mount Apo in 1932, one settler offered them a snack of papaya, the only fruit he had at that time, while another opened his house to them to spend the night when dusk found the two men near his place.

As for amusements on the frontier, all sorts of games were devised, by both young and old, whether Filipino, American or Okinawan. Local peoples were known to play a “curious game of football” using a ball made up of woven rattan, while young boys in the mountain villages fashioned tops from hardwood with strings made of abaca fiber. The girls played with jack stones comprised of small pebbles and learned to play hopscotch and “London Bridge” when an American teacher came and taught the games. In Padada, a Filipino-American daughter of a planter and her Filipino friends played with jolens (marbles), fashioned slingshots from tree branches, and kites from newspapers.

---

1 It was played by having “the players stand in a circle and one throw up the ball. The one nearest to whom it falls kicks it up again so as to fall in any part of the circle.” When the ball goes outside of the circle, it was considered out. The players strike the ball “with any part of the foot, often with the sole in a swift back kick, when the ball comes down behind them, sending it straight up into the air again, or so as to fall within the circle.” (Robert Franklin Black, “OTao Po: A Salutation from Mindanao” (Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands, August 1905), 6, Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.)
Visayan workers living in the camarín amused themselves with different sorts of activities, from playing volleyball and basketball, telling stories, to having drinking sessions (and even the sporadic drunken brawl) during weekends and holidays. On special occasions, they had baylihan where men and women from nearby villages danced to a live band. In the same manner, Okinawan migrant farmers had a busy social calendar, like holding an annual sumo match between village associations, to fundraising activities towards erecting a statue in Okinawa in honor of an entrepreneur and labor recruiter compatriot who had done well in Davao.

Due to the rise and fall of world market prices, and the plant’s life cycle, life in the hinterlands was lived according to several rhythms. But during the first decades of the twentieth century, there was another quite different temporal rhythm that Davao inhabitants used to mark time - the flying of the fruit bats. The large bats spent the day hanging from branches of trees along the beaches, and the night feasting on fruit trees of the hilly interior. Twice a day, a huge cloud of them flew overhead, darkening the sky at dawn and dusk, as they made their way between the shore and the hills. They were said to be so punctual that they could synchronize their flight with the sound of the whistle at the plantation, marking the beginning and end of a day, as they flew from the seaside to the interior.

Just as the bats flew between the coast and interior over the centuries, abaca also brought the world outside to the hinterlands of Davao through the people who came to work and live there; the Filipinos from various parts of the archipelago, the Okinawans and Americans on their transpacific journeys, or other foreigners involved in the abaca trade. Abaca linked the far hinterlands of the interior to the trade centers of New York, Tokyo, and London in the twentieth century. But as the daily experience of those who worked in the abaca fields showed, these trading centers were never so large to be the sole determinants of the future. The workers made their own lives in conjunction with the cycle of the markets and the lifespan of abaca. Their activities, from using the hagotan to accelerate production, to the painstakingly slow research and maintenance work, showed that there were several ways to mark time and progress in Davao. There were also several ways to travel between coast and hinterlands.
4. Connecting hub and hinterlands: private roads and public transportation

a. Private roads

In 1931, a legal case about two trucks owned by two plantations perplexed Governor General Dwight Davis. The Insular Auditor and the Director of Public Works could not agree whether the trucks needed to be registered. The Insular Auditor wanted the plantations penalized for failing to register their motor vehicles. However, the Director of Public Works judged it unfair to charge them registration fees since the trucks never traversed public highways. Manila had no precedent for cases where trucks did not pass over public roads. Governor Davis consulted with legal experts on both sides of the Pacific before concurring with the Director of Public Works.

By the 1930s, Davao was a motorized frontier and an agricultural province with a large number of plantation roads. The two plantations in question were located in different parts of Davao – Odell Plantation was in the north, while Mt. Apo Plantation was in the south, suggesting a province-wide web of private roads. Due to the practice of cultivating abaca on 10-hectare fields bordered by road lots, plantations were the largest road builders in the province. When plantations opened up new abaca fields in the interior, they connected their feeder roads to the early highways built along the coast by the government. Later plantations located deeper inland attached their road systems to that of a neighbor’s nearer the coast. Agricultural development had created a vast transport network that stretched from the coast to the interior, linked together by the roads of many plantations.

A toll system ensured proper maintenance of these roads, and enabled the general public to travel across the province. It was through this widespread network of private roads that trucks went about their daily business, rarely using the roads built by the government. It took a lot of coordination among the plantations to regulate this road network. By forging agreements with its coastal neighbors, inland plantations gained access to ports and commercial centers in the coastal towns of Malita, Malalag, Padada, Digos, Santa Cruz, Davao, Lasang, Madaum, Mati, Caraga, Baganga, Cateel, and Boston. The case of the Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. illustrates this

---

process. Situated in the forested interior north of Davao town, the company collaborated with its neighbors to build and maintain a network of private roads in the late 1920s:

There [was] no public highway anywhere in the vicinity of the land. Of the Provincial North Road under project, so far, only about fifteen kilometers have been constructed... However, and since the road is to run along the beach it will render us no benefit in the way of reduced cost of transportation... In order, therefore, to provide ourselves with an outlet to Lasang on the beach, we, working in conjunction with a number of other public land leaseholders located between our lease and the sea, have opened a dirt road some ten kilometers long and running all the way from a point on the Lasang River to the sea.¹⁹⁸

The practice of plantation-to-plantation road development and coordination was a practical response to curtailment of government road building projects after the transfer of the Mindanao administration from the U.S. Army to civilian rule in 1913. In most parts of Mindanao, the construction of new roads came to a halt when the American military left, and some roads reverted to jungle as they were “practically destroyed through neglect.”¹⁹⁹ After nearly a decade of negligence, road-building efforts in Mindanao revived in the 1920s when Leonard Wood, a former military governor of Mindanao, became Governor General of the Philippines. However, the pace of government roadwork could no longer keep up with the plantation developments in Davao by that time. In a 1930 report, a colonial official noted that the “standard of comparison” in Davao was 50 kilometers of first class public roads to 250 kilometers of private ones, with private roads not only costing a quarter of the cost of public roads but they were also better constructed and maintained.²⁰⁰

Road maintenance activities were often funded by a plantation’s operating expenses, offset by revenues coming from tolls.²⁰¹ Maintenance was a crucial aspect of the upkeep of plantation roads, especially the unpaved ones. If not maintained after heavy rains, dirt roads became impassable for vehicular traffic, becoming too soft and slippery for automobiles and trucks.²⁰² Regular rainfall meant constant maintenance which made cash generated from road tolls a significant feature of the revenue. However, tolls paid to other plantations were an additional expense on the other side of a plantation’s balance sheet. Interior plantations carried heavier maintenance costs and toll expenses because their trucks passed through lengthier stretches of toll roads compared to those places located nearer the coasts.²⁰³
Despite the higher costs, many inland plantations still preferred to pay tolls rather than use other means of transportation. Plantations like the Southern Davao Development Company preferred trucks over animal wagons or riverine transportation because trucks carried a larger volume of abaca than any of the alternatives. Most of Davao’s waterways were of little value for transport due to their shallow depths or rapid currents—a natural feature that made Davao’s frontier more dependent on motorized land-based transportation than the traditional riverine transport.

In regard to public conveyance, toll roads provided public access between the interior and the coast. In the same way that these roads enabled the transport of abaca and plantation supplies between the key centers and the hinterlands, plantation employees used privately-built roads for errands and leisure. Since most laborers lived in the hinterlands, personal travel was less frequent than the movement of plantation trucks carrying the harvest, machinery, food and other plantation necessities. Consequently, most plantations only charged motorized vehicles, and let people on foot or horseback use the roads free of charge. Pedestrian traffic was limited, as most people preferred motorized transport— in the form of a public utility vehicle, more popularly known as the P.U.

b. Public Transportation

i. The public transport pioneers

The prevalence of private roads, combined with large numbers of workers living in the distant interiors, resulted in the development of a distinctive public transportation system by 1915. Local Historian Ernesto Corcino notes the P.U. passenger car business, along with paid trucking, provided the transportation services that enabled plantations to be established farther inland. Socially, such service prevented workers in the hinterlands from being isolated from the more populous coast, making life in the interior more palatable for migrants. Materially, workers could take public transport to the coasts to purchase necessities. In terms of facilitating business, government employees and commercial agents traveled between towns and plantations using the P.U. without having to buy a car. The public utility vehicles provided plantation worker Maria P. Vega, a resident of Santa Cruz, with the means to procure goods for her daily needs in Davao town, while provincial sheriff Arsenio E.
Atienza traveled cheaply on official business between downtown Davao and inland Guianga in the 1930s.  

P.U. were registered businesses operated by individuals who owned a car that took people around Davao for a fee, akin to a taxi service in big cities. They specialized in providing transportation to residents of hinterland plantations, passing through private roads along the way. The lightweight P.U. vehicles were allowed to travel on plantation roads since they did not cause heavy wear and tear. Hence, P.U. operators often preferred Fords since they were light and rugged, and could pass over dirt roads without difficulty.

P.U. were known for their low rates as they picked-up passengers along the way, and charged each customer according to the distance traveled. When the Public Service Commission issued a ruling in the 1920s that required all public transportation in the Philippines to charge on a per hour basis and only from designated stations, the P.U. operators organized themselves to fight the ruling, and hired a lawyer to maintain their usual service. The Commission granted Davao operators a favorable ruling on account of the special conditions existing in Davao, i.e., the generally small financial resources of its people, and the fact that the [group of P.U. operators] does not serve all places accessible to motor traffic, particularly over private roads through which buses ... are not allowed or permitted to pass – and there [being] ... more private roads than public roads...

The victory testified to the significance of the P.U. as a singular public transport service in Davao. Catering mostly to working men and women, Davao had the largest number of P.U. vehicle registrations in the country in 1927, at 234 automobiles, while Manila came second, with 159. P.U. transport popularity reached its peak in Davao in 1930, with 400 vehicles officially registered. However, bus companies and ‘colorums’ offering alternative services provided stiff competition to the public transport operators in the 1930s, which decreased their numbers in Davao to only 180 by 1933.

---

1 Fords were preferred because their steel body lasted longer in the Mindanao tropics than the wooden bodies of other cars like the Chevrolet. (Samuel B. Frank, Samuel B. Frank Interviews, interview by Russel Frank, January 28, 1990, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.)

2 Private vehicles not registered with the Public Service Commission as public utility vehicles, and operated by individuals on the sly. The dealer of Ford Cars in Davao estimated that about 90 percent of the P.U. ownerships were sub-rosa in the 1930s. (Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, August 22, 1941,” August 22, 1941.)
ii. Growing pains

Although not a direct competitor to the P.U., the Davao Autobus Company provided an alternative transport choice for the population of Davao. Founded by an all-Filipino group of investors in 1931, Davao Autobus was meant to provide bus services to various points in Davao. Davao Autobus differed from the P.U. through the type of vehicle, schedules, and routes it offered. True to its name, Davao Autobus used buses, not cars (like the P.U.) to carry a larger number of passengers, on fixed time schedules and fixed routes. Because they were heavier and caused more wear and tear to the roads, the buses could not pass through certain streets in Davao town, nor could they enter private plantations. Customers using buses had to walk to their destinations if they lived on the plantations. Consequently, the P.U. operators continued to enjoy the patronage of plantation workers, while buses catered to a different but growing market – the urban dwellers who commuted between the towns of Davao, Guianga, and Santa Cruz.

Davao Autobus Company had a difficult time in its first year because its undercapitalized state only afforded buses in decrepit condition, and at the same time, it met opposition from the well-established P.U. operators. In a counter move, Davao Autobus tried to revoke the franchise of the P.U. operators by submitting a complaint.
to the Public Service Commission in 1932, but to no avail. The Commission overturned the complaint stating that “the people in Davao still desire the kind of service” rendered by the P.U. operators, adding that P.U. franchises were obtained “many years before” Davao Autobus Company began its operations.\textsuperscript{216} Difficult conditions during its first year, as well as financial trouble, resulted in receivership and a change of management for the bus company.\textsuperscript{217}

By this time, the situation of the riding public in Davao had become dire. The decrease in the number of aging P.U. cars, the run-down fleet and limited routes of Davao Autobus, as well as the rapid increase of the population, caused a transportation crisis. In 1933, workers in Santa Cruz complained that P.U. operators had retired a large number of automobiles from service while offering no replacement. Only two-thirds of the cars were in service, with a quarter of these working vehicles entering the repair shops\textsuperscript{N} daily, while around 60 drivers no longer worked their rounds.\textsuperscript{218} Passengers were concerned for their safety due to the poor state of the cars in operation.\textsuperscript{219} A related safety concern was overloading, commonly practiced by P.U. vehicles in violation of the Philippine automobile law.\textsuperscript{220}

Motor transport was so integral to the lives of Davao residents that it affected the conduct of business. Provincial Sheriff Atienza testified that he often wasted time standing on the road, waiting for a bus or a P.U. vehicle that had extra space for him. His law enforcement work suffered as a result of the delay, as he often could not complete his daily tasks. The commuting public complained that P.U. drivers had become smug due to the lack of vehicles, choosing who to take into their cars. Even if they had a mandate to take in passengers without fixed routes, P.U. drivers were selective with passengers whose destinations ran counter to the direction of the majority riders in his car.\textsuperscript{221} Atienza explained drivers’ motives in an anecdote,

“A,” after a long and desperate wait, hails a passing P.U. automobile, and begs the driver to take him to his destination – would you believe that “A” will be taken,

\textsuperscript{N}Interestingly, Edgerton (2007) noted that Ford attempted to standardize the repair of its vehicles in 1925, but failed because of its inability to “cope with the many vicissitudes and uncertainties of the car-repair business.” However, in developing countries, like 1970s Ghana, small local repair shops fabricating customized car parts with a welding machine, made low-cost transport possible through an almost daily repair regimen. The social life of Davao PUs in the 1930s lends an earlier example to this grassroots repair-for-cheap-transport phenomenon. (David Edgerton, \textit{The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82–84.)
bearing in mind that he is the only passenger for that place? No, impossible, because if the driver does so, he will surely lose.\(^{222}\)

### iii. Competition

At the height of the transport crisis, a group of Filipino, Spanish and Lebanese residents of Davao formed Blue Star Transportation Co. in 1934, opening new routes within and outside of Davao town. Innovative for its time, combining the features of the fixed bus service with the smaller passenger cars of the P.U., the company planned to run nine auto-calesas\(^{9}\) on three fixed routes along the major streets of Davao town at fifteen-minute intervals.\(^{223}\) The five-passenger auto-calesas were meant to ply streets that heavier buses could not enter.\(^{224}\) Aside from serving the main thoroughfares of Davao town, Blue Star sought to connect the western interior of the province with its southwest coast by having a 9-passenger wagon service along Guianga, Davao and Digos municipalities.\(^{225}\) The transport company also planned an interprovincial service, linking Davao with Cotabato.

Grand though its plans were, government regulations and financial constraints forced Blue Star to scale them down. The Public Service Commission granted Blue Star authority to operate only within Davao town, in deference to Davao Autobus’ province-wide franchise. Furthermore, instead of fixed routes plying at a fixed time, Blue Star was mandated to operate as a normal P.U. service – without fixed routes or regular termini, without a definite time and fixed charge, but rather charging per passenger.\(^{226}\) After the government ruling, Blue Star’s remaining comparative advantage from the P.U. was its venue of operation which was within Davao town, rather than on outlying plantations.\(^{227}\) Furthermore, the cost of the vehicles limited the number of auto-calesas bought from nine to five, which made its operations smaller than what its owners originally envisioned.\(^{228}\)

Blue Star’s entry into the public transport business, however, injected much-needed competition among Davao’s service providers that benefited the riding public. Competition ensured that Davao public transport rates were among the lowest in the country. Based on rumors that Blue Star planned to offer a minimum rate of 2

---

\(^{9}\) Based on the Philippine Law Dictionary (84), the term auto-calesa was of local origin from the city of Manila and originally described a three-wheeled motor vehicle. (Federico Moreno, *Philippine Law Dictionary: Words and Phrases in Philippine Law Legally and Judicially Defined and Accepted*, 3rd Ed. (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1988), 84.)
centavos per section to compete against the existing minimum of 10 centavos per kilometer, P.U. operators lowered their passenger rates, even without authority from the Public Service Commission. Eventually, the Commission allowed Blue Star the prevailing rate of 10 centavos per passenger, while the old and rickety P.U. charged as low as 5 centavos per kilometer on certain routes.

The riding populace of Davao enjoyed newer public vehicles when Blue Star introduced the latest Willy’s 77 A/C model in 1934. Soon afterwards, the Davao Autobus Company, under new management, replaced its dilapidated buses with new ones, and by 1939, boasted of a regular check-up regimen by mechanics in their modern bus station. By the late 1930s, Davao’s modern public transportation service held its own merits in comparison with other cities in the country:

In Manila, taxicabs, carretelas, autocabs and street cars are used in conveying passengers within the city proper and suburbs. In Cebu, the most common street conveyance is the old fashioned tartanilla; in Zamboanga, the antiquated calesa. On this score, Davao beats easily the three—above mentioned cities[,] for in conveying passengers within the city limits what are used are costly limousines, pretty touring cars and expensive sedans at practically the same rate as are ordinarily charged by the tartanilla in Cebu, very much cheaper than what is charged by the taxicab in Manila and much lower than what is ordinarily charged by the calesa in Zamboanga.

Concerned with good service and the continued patronage of its clientele, Davao transportation companies led Mindanao in the introduction of covered waiting areas, and the adherence to punctual schedules. Transport firms also treated employees well. In a city where cars and trucks were numerous, machines widely used, and mechanical jobs in high demand, businesses kept their drivers, conductors and mechanics contented with high-paying salaries and benefits such as Christmas bonuses, and medical leave with pay. Work benefits were another important sign that on the motorized frontier of Davao populated by tens of thousands of employees and laborers, working men and women reigned supreme not only in the abaca fields but also on its streets. From mastering the science of abaca cultivation to demanding the best public transportation service, the people of Davao were achieving a good standard of living by the 1930s.


3 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, “Abaca (Manila Hemp.),” Monthly Summary, Commerce of the Philippine Islands (War Department, July 1904), 7, The United States and its Territories, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/philamer/aeu3811.0006.001/11?q1=h.t.+edwards&view=image&size=100.


5 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, “Abaca (Manila Hemp.),” 7–8.


7 Ibid.


11 Ibid., 12.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 88.


20 Robinson and Johnson, Abaca: A Cordage Fiber, 23.

21 Bureau of Insular Affairs War Department, “Abaca (Manila Hemp.),” Monthly Summary, Commerce of the Philippine Islands (War Department, July 1904), 8, The United States and its Territories, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/philamer/aeu3811.0006.001/11?q1=h.t.+edwards&view=image&size=100.

22 Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” January 2, 1931, 2, Southern Davao Development Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.

23 Ibid.


26 Joseph Ralston Hayden, “Mindanao and Sulu Notes from First Air Trip” (Handwritten notes, Aboard an airplane, August 1934), Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.


244


Carl E. Guthe, A New Clearing, Stacked to Burn, Davao, Photograph, 1924, Carl Eugen Guthe Collections, Bentley Historical Library.


Ibid., 5–6.


Elizabeth O. Hall Hayden, “Across Mindanao” 1931, 16, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.

Ibid.


Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” January 2, 1931, 1–2, Southern Davao Development Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


Santiago P. Dakudao, “Wartime Diary” (Negros & Iloilo, 1940s), Santiago P. Dakudao Papers, Dakudao Family Collection.


Ibid., 72–73; Santiago P. Dakudao, “Wartime Diary.”


Robinson and Johnson, Abaca: A Cordage Fiber, 33.


Roxas, “Roxas Memorandum to Lyster Dewey,” 2.

Ibid.

Roxas, “Roxas Memorandum to Lyster Dewey,” 2.


Ibid.


Ibid., 5.


Frank, Gohn, and Kosuyama, Patrick Henry Frank and William Henry Gohn vs. G. Kosuyama, No. G.R. No. L-38010 (Supreme Court Philippine Islands December 21, 1933).


Ibid., 6.

“Contrato de Deuda Y Manera de Pago between Suat Liana (Bagoba) and Kumayochi Miyauchi,” May 29, 1932, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.

H.H. Boyle, “Veterans Turn Davao Jungle into Rich Plantations: Teach Industry to Tribes,” *American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, January 1926, 10; Macario D Tiu, *Davao : Reconstructing History from Text and Memory* (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 129.

Jose P. Laurel, “Memorandum for the Director of Lands Re: Dr. Dakudao’s Lease Application,” Memorandum, (October 23, 1933), 8, Santiago P. Dakudao Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid., 25.


Edwards and Saleeby, “Abaca (Manila Hemp),” 32.


Post Card, Bringing Hemp to Town, Photograph Post Card, 1924, Carl Eugen Guthe Collections, Bentley Historical Library.

Edwards and Saleeby, “Abaca (Manila Hemp),” 32.

Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” January 2, 1931, 2, Southern Davao Development Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 134.

Ibid., 128.


“Contrato de Deuda Y Manera de Pago between Suat Liana (Bagoba) and Kumayochi Miyauchi,” May 29, 1932, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library.


Jose P. Laurel, “Memorandum for the Director of Lands Re: Dr. Dakudao’s Lease Application,” Memorandum, (October 23, 1933), 8, Santiago P. Dakudao Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation; Mariano Garchitorena, “The Philippine Abaca Industry - Its Problems” (Fiber Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 1938), 25.


Contrato de Deuda Y Manera de Pago between Suat Liana (Bagoba) and Kumayochi Miyauchi; Alvarez, "Why the Davao Hemp Industry Is Successful," 7.

Laurel, Del Rosario and Sabido, "Testimony of Sanama (Moro) for Maria Aguipo, SA 10699," November 5, 1934, 2, Hijo Plantation Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.

Lucy Ebro Pelayo, Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.

Laurel, Del Rosario and Sabido, "Testimony of Sanama (Moro) for Maria Aguipo, SA 10699," 1.

Ibid., 2.


Ibid., 126, 128, 131–33, 135.

Ibid., 135.


Tiu, Davao : Reconstructing History from Text and Memory, 125–36.


Anonymous, "District of Davao," 70.

Ibid., 71–72.


Felicitas Campos Yap, Interview with Felicitas Campos Yap, Audio, May 12, 2015.


Alvarez, "Why the Davao Hemp Industry Is Successful," 7; Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.


Quirina Lapaza Fulgarinas, Interview with Quirina Lapaza Fulgarinas, May 21, 2015.


Kaneshiro, "The Other Japanese: Okinawan Immigrants to the Philippines, 1903-1941," 78.


Cole, Savage Gentlemen, 216.

Ibid.


Elizabeth O. Hall Hayden, “Across Mindanao” 1931, 17, Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Library; Cole, Savage Gentlemen, 213.


Tiu, Davao : Reconstructing History from Text and Memory, 126, 129; Kaneshiro, “The Other Japanese: Okinawan Immigrants to the Philippines, 1903-1941,” 78.

Roberto L. Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao, May 7, 2015, Davao City.
Robert Franklin Black, “OTao Po: A Salutation from Mindanao” (Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands, August 1905), 2, Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.

Ibid., 1.

Ibid., 3.

Avelina V. Mahinay, Interview with Avelina V. Mahinay, June 15, 2015.

Gloria Quiiba, Interview with Gloria Quiiba, May 27, 2015, May 27, 2015.

Kaneshiro, “The Other Japanese: Okinawan Immigrants to the Philippines, 1903-1941,” 78.

Black, “OTao Po: A Salutation from Mindanao,” 2.

Mahinay, Interview with Avelina V. Mahinay.

Kaneshiro, “The Other Japanese: Okinawan Immigrants to the Philippines, 1903-1941,” 78.


Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen.


Mahinay, Interview with Avelina V. Mahinay.

Commission of the Census, Census of the Philippines: 1939 (Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1940), 110.

Anonymous, “District of Davao.”

Ibid.; Black, “OTao Po: A Salutation from Mindanao.”

Cole, Savage Gentlemen, 213.

Ibid.


Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.

Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 126, 129, 131.

Ibid., 131.


Cole, Savage Gentlemen, 218.


J.C. Early, “Memorandum for the Governor General On Davao,” Memorandum, (September 15, 1930), 5, Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.

Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” January 2, 1931, 2, Southern Davao Development Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


J.C. Early, “Memorandum for the Governor General: Provincial Government - Davao,” Memorandum, (September 8, 1930), 2, Hayden Papers, Bentley Historical Library.


Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” 2.
204 Ibid.
206 Southern Davao Development Co., Inc., “Southern Davao Development Co., Inc. to the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, January 2, 1931,” 2.
208 Maria P. et al Vega, “Petition of Santa Cruz Residents to Public Service Commission,” Petition, (October 20, 1933), 1, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
209 Arsenio E. Atienza, “Declaracion Jurada,” October 27, 1933, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation; Vega, “Petition of Santa Cruz Residents to Public Service Commission.”
211 Public Service Commission, “Decision on Case No. 33651, Davao Autobus Company, Inc. vs. Braulio D. Abayan, et Al.,” August 22, 1933, 1, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
213 Vicente Hizon Panlilio, “Resumen de Las Pruebas de La Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc.,” November 11, 1933, 2, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
214 Vicente Hizon Panlilio, “Resumen de Las Pruebas de La Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc.,” November 11, 1933, 2, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
215 PUS along San Pedro Street, 1930, Photograph, 1930, Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.
218 Maria P. et al Vega, “Petition of Santa Cruz Residents to Public Service Commission,” Petition, (October 20, 1933), 1–2, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
219 Arsenio E. Atienza, “Declaracion Jurada,” October 27, 1933, 2, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation; Vega, “Petition of Santa Cruz Residents to Public Service Commission.”
220 Vicente Hizon Panlilio, “Resumen de Las Pruebas de La Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc.,” November 11, 1933, 4, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
221 Atienza, “Declaracion Jurada.”
222 Ibid.
223 Ramon Echevarria, “Memorandum Para El Abogado Sr. Rafael S. Castillo,” August 1933, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
225 Echevarria, “Memorandum Para El Abogado Sr. Rafael S. Castillo.”
226 Public Service Commission, “Certificate of Public Convenience,” April 27, 1934, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
228 Ibid., 4.
229 Public Service Commission, “Order Case No. 37198 Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc.,” December 13, 1934, Blue Star Transportation Co., Inc. Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.
Part III

CREATING CULTURE
Davao’s geographical location as a contact zone for the circulation of material goods, culture and ideas intensified during the American colonial era, especially with the advent of an abaca industry that involved peoples of various nationalities and global connections. The Davao frontier evoke Hamalainen and Johnson’s (2012) notions of contact zones where no single group dominated, as different multiethnic individuals encountered peoples and objects from different cultures. Consequently, cultural exchanges resulted to adaptation, which Burke (2009) explains as “borrowing piecemeal then incorporating the pieces into a traditional structure,” and also, appropriation, where the borrowing was done freely. These results were widespread in Davao’s early twentieth century history as inhabitants liberally made aspects of the different cultures they encountered into their own.

Transplanted Filipino settlers on the Davao frontier embarked on an engagement with the foreign given the presence of imported manufactured goods (and the dearth of local ones), while participating in an agricultural industry that transcended the local. Though constrained by the setting, the exchange of material objects, as experienced by the individual, took place in Davao without the use of force. Hence, exchange as a social-cultural experience was not underpinned by the potency of political structures, but rather, by more neutral cultural factors embedded in the fabric of the economy and society of Davao. The absence of coercion meant choice was still a major factor in these exchanges. Utilizing foreign goods or adopting foreign practices were done out of necessity, convenience and a personal quest for betterment on an evolving frontier.

More importantly, it was in the encounter and mingling of different cultures that Filipinos in Davao helped to fashion new cultural directions. This chapter explores aspects of culture-making through the physical places and processes of trade and then proceeds to study certain material goods that were mediums of cultural encounter and exchange.
1. Venues of commercial exchanges

American colonial interests ensured the maintenance and subsequent transformation of the centuries-long trade between inland dwellers and sea-faring merchants along the coasts of Davao Gulf. While the indigenous tribal groups who lived in the forested uplands eluded the new colonizers at first, contacts with Visayan coastal inhabitants were frequent. The U.S. Army reported favorably on the Davao Visayans, who lived in a similar manner to their northern cousins, describing them as “superior... law-abiding and well-conducted Christian people compared to their fellowmen in the north.”\(^3\) The hill tribes came down from upland areas to barter with the Visayan settlers and itinerant traders on certain days of the week, making the coastal settlements contact zones between Lumads and Hispanic Visayans.

The indigenous peoples already possessed a self-sustaining pre-colonial economic system. They produced and collected modest surpluses for trade, while living in the interior, beyond the pale of Spanish rule, and bringing their commodities to the coast to trade. One of the sites of indigenous coastal trade was Tuban. It was a settlement established by the Jesuits in the 1870s, located at the mouth of a river along the coast of Santa Cruz, where until the 1920s, Bagobo-Visayans continued to trade with Tagacaolos and Muslim Kalagans.\(^4\) Bagobos regularly came from the highlands to trade on an agreed date arranged by local datus. An account of a Bagobo-Visayan whose peoples brought *camotes* and other products to Tuban, explained how this trading arrangement worked:

> 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 the date. Whatever we brought back from the trade in Tuban was shared with our relatives who usually came around when they know that we had just returned from a trade trip. This was the custom.\(^5\)

With the arrival of the Americans in the early twentieth century, commercial and cultural engagement in contact zones developed in a new direction, as the new colonizers brought their earlier frontier experiences of trade and exchange based on

\(^3\) The Visayans of Davao also included Tagalogs, who with the Visayans from the old town of Caraga in Surigao, settled shortly after the Spanish conquest of Davao. (Heidi K. Gloria, *The Bagobos: Their Ethnohistory and Acculturation* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987), 55.)
the North American trading posts. From the onset, trade was an important component of American colonial policy and the Army used market days as an occasion to befriend and impose their rule over the otherwise hard to reach Lumads. As soon as they arrived, American forces encouraged highland peoples to come down to the frontier outposts for market days by building wagon roads that spread out from Davao town, the provincial capital.

Early road building activities in pursuit of trade and pacification ensured that the provincial capital also became the principal center for cultural and commercial exchanges. Roads invited “intertribal intercourse” and stimulated “industry and production and the export of surplus products from the coast.” The new roads yielded immediate results. The number of tribal peoples who came for the weekly markets increased in just a few months and was appreciated by townsfolk who assisted in road construction.

The U.S. Army’s focus on trade as a major aspect of its policy of colonial intervention in Davao differed from the alliance-setting modus operandi implemented in the Sulu Archipelago under the 1899 Bates Treaty, or in the conduct of war against hostile revolutionaries in the northern provinces of Misamis and Surigao. Davao, as the third town occupied by an Army that arrived from the west coast of Mindanao in December 1899, stood in stark contrast to the western districts of Zamboanga and Cotabato in regard to its relative isolation from the Muslim world. Thus, from the beginning of American rule in Davao, the improvement of trade and commerce was an important aspect of colonial policy, practice and town life.

---


a. Government stores and trading stations

In 1904, the Moro Province government introduced the Moro Exchange, a government-regulated market for indigenous trade. The brainchild of Zamboanga Governor, Major John P. Finley, the government now provided permanent structures in a designated area of a town. It replaced the traditional settings of the trade where business was ordinarily conducted under the shade of a tree, on an expanse of beach, or done at a great disadvantage to the Lumads in the municipal market. The Moro Exchange, however, did not replace the municipal markets which were ongoing ventures in the town, nor did it preclude the participation of tribal peoples from them.

What the Moro Exchange did was provide an alternative setting and environment for the hill tribes to sell their forest products and produce to coastal traders at fair prices. American administrators believed that indigenous traders were often taken advantage of by Visayan, Chinese and Spanish merchants in the municipal markets because the tribes lacked a secure place to stay on the coasts. In the municipal markets, unscrupulous merchants often waited until the end of the day to negotiate a cut rate price with a Lumad seller who was by then worried at the prospect of carrying unsold produce back to the hills. Through the Moro Exchange established in the municipalities, the government rented out stalls for permanent or transient use under licenses based on no more than one percent of the sales for the day. Those who had permanent stalls were allowed to stay until they completed their business. In Davao, a few meters from the Army barracks, at the end of Calle Washington near the water’s edge, was the site of the exchange established in 1910, which people came to refer as “Trading.”

Hill peoples sold their harvests of almaciga, gutta, rubber, and bejuco to European, Chinese and Muslim traders under the supervision of a government agent who set the average market price of the products for sale in the Moro Exchange. But there were occasions when the Exchange failed to safeguard the interests of its illiterate tribal customers. Cases of abuse by Chinese and Filipino traders continued, while a remarkable case in Zamboanga found the government agent guilty of forcing

---

D According to Gen. Pershing, the term “moro” was a misnomer since the “Muslims” were only one among the many categories of people participating in the trading activities conducted under the moro exchanges. (John J. Pershing, “Pershing to Gen. J.F. Bell, Nov. 30, 1910,” November 30, 1910, Manuscript Division, United States Library of Congress.)
people to sell their goods to the Exchange at less-than-favorable prices. The Exchange also limited government interaction to just those who came down to trade, while a larger number of tribes were still inaccessible in the more remote interior highlands. Hence, premised on the aims of protecting the interior tribes from unscrupulous traders while also stimulating increased commercial activities, Moro Province Governor John J. Pershing established the Industrial Trading Stores in 1911.

Rather than the tribes coming down to the coasts, Pershing’s Industrial Trading Stores, often called ‘trading stations,’ brought the market to the highlands. From strictly coastal operations during its first decade, the government exchanges now moved into the interior as the colonial administration marked its second decade in Mindanao. Davao’s Tribal Wards were among the first venues of these on-the-spot trading stores. Similar to the trading posts that dotted the American West, trading stations in Mindanao were situated in distant locations in the interior where local tribes could bring their forest products to exchange or sell. The hill tribes, some walking as far as forty kilometres to reach the specially-built lean-to stalls on a jungle clearing, traded with government agents, who acted as merchants operating under strict price-control measures. Merchant-agents, according to the rules, informed their indigenous client of the current market prices of jungle products before entering into any transaction, and the local people were often surprised at the high prices they received for their trade goods. Like its precursor, the Industrial Trading Stores were exempt from municipal tax, with the government funding the system through stall rentals and government licenses.

Whereas the government merely regulated the transactions of the merchants and tribes under the Moro Exchange scheme, the Moro Province administration assumed the role of an active trader in the Industrial Trading Stations. Like a commercial enterprise, the government engaged in the consolidation and distribution of merchandise. It transported surplus goods and foodstuffs from remote markets to central warehouses in provincial capitals, then redistributed merchandise to other markets where they were in demand. In doing so, the government also contracted commercial launches to move these goods in Mindanao’s vast area.
By dealing directly with the interior tribes and eliminating the exploitative middle-men, government administrators believed that they were giving the Lumads a fair deal. However, by the second decade of the twentieth century, more itinerant traders were venturing into the interior, introducing the hill tribes to alcohol which sometimes led to loss of “valuable property for nothing.” In northern Davao, the Manobos’ inordinate desire for the salted fish sold by traveling Visayan peddlers made them willing to submit themselves “sometimes to tyranny and to the most exorbitant rates in order to obtain it.”

In 1913, after reports of abuses by traveling Arabian, Chinese and Japanese traders in Cotabato and Davao, the Moro Province Legislative Council enacted a law which required all traders to have a license to trade among the highland tribes. But, these well-meaning directives also had the effect of establishing a trading monopoly for the government. Pershing, however, did not intend for the Industrial Trading Stations to compete with honest traders, and thus transferred many stations in more populous areas to reliable traders on condition that government price-control measures continue and fair treatment be given to the locals. The government continued to open new stations in the less populated hinterlands, and did so even after civilian rule replaced the U.S. Army-run Moro Province.

Thus, a phenomenon of adaptation and change, observed in most tribal communities upon contact with colonial enterprise in Southeast Asia, America and other parts of the globe, also took place on the Davao frontier. Daily practices among the Davao tribes were significantly altered. By 1910, the government stores had added the coastal products of salt and fish to Bilaan meals. This not only affected Bilaan diet, but also their livelihood, since they started growing surplus of rice, camotes, corn, sugar-cane, banana and abaca in their small swidden clearings for barter at the designated trading locations to satisfy their new tastes.

---

Pershing cites in his memoir examples of Chinese merchants cheating indigenous peoples. One bartered goods at over 500 percent profit, and in another instance, rice was sold to people suffering a famine at 300 percent profit. (John J. Pershing, My Life before the World War, 1860-1917, a Memoir, ed. John T. Greenwood, American Warriors (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 306–7.) Also, in his 1911 Report as Governor General, he mentioned cases where Spanish, Chinese, Filipino and American traders did business at 100 percent profit, or cornered rice during the monsoon season to sell to the hill tribes. (John J. Pershing, “Annual Report of Brigadier General John J. Pershing, U.S. Army, Governor of the Moro Province, For the Year Ending June 30, 1911,” Annual Report (Zamboanga, P.I.: The Government of the Moro Province, 1911), 8–9.)
livelihood changes occurred among the Bagobos who would intentionally produce a surplus of abaca, betel boxes, bells and knife guards to barter for cotton cloth, iron pots, copper gongs, bells, beads, and shell discs. While among the Manobos, fire-making customs changed when they started using matches manufactured in Manila or Japan distributed by the trading posts instead of their ancient methods of employing the fire saw or flint.

These exchanges enriched tribal material culture. Bagobo weavers fashioned more elaborate designs due to the ready availability of imported cloth, shell discs, and highly prized beads from the trading posts. For the coastal Mandayas, the availability of an assortment of imported colored yarn enabled them to embroider more colorful and intricate designs, including combining imported cloth with abaca fiber in weaving a skirt. These Mandaya skirts were highly prized by the neighboring upland Manobos. In one account, a man travelled four days to procure such ‘imported’ skirt, and the woman who obtained it danced for joy upon touching it, explaining that the intricacy of the design could only be made by supernatural means.

In more temporal matters, revenues gained from government exchanges and trading stations were instrumental in financing the operations of the Moro Province and allowed for less taxation in other areas. Through revenues generated from the trading stores, the Moro Province led the country in exempting local coast traffic and cultivated land from taxes, which contributed to Mindanao’s rapid agricultural development and increased exports. But beyond financial concerns, the exchanges were crucial in the government’s self-proclaimed role and policy as a bearer of institutional progress and development.

Major Finley considered the exchanges as the secret of governmental success and the basic foundation of “civilization” during General Leonard Wood’s governorship. Wood’s successor, General Tasker Bliss, also believed in the power of commercial markets to civilize the tribes by introducing them to Western material culture and practice. Sharing his predecessors’ view on the civilizing influence of commercial markets, Pershing also saw the stores as the practical way to bridge the economic and political divide, establishing proper relations between the rulers and the governed, and among the hill tribes and the peoples of the coasts. The trading posts
created the context for Lumads to be treated fairly by coastal merchants, thereby removing their “suspicions” of coastal peoples, which then encouraged them to settle on the coasts. 40

Since tribal autonomy was perceived as a hindrance to governance and development, Pershing’s practical view, in the long run, coincided with Finley’s civilizing aspirations as the government stores did facilitate colonial control over its semi-sedentary interior population. Materially and culturally, the stores brought foreign goods within easy reach of the indigenous tribes which had a lasting impact on their lifeways and thought. By doing so, the material culture that the stores provided compelled the tribes to join their lowland counterparts under the umbrella of consumerism in the guise of a decidedly American modernity.

b. Plantation stores, tiendas and other private retail establishments

Plantation stores were a crucial component of the colonial economy and workforce, especially for a government intent on enabling material progress establish the foundation for future advancement along social, moral and intellectual lines. 41 The early planters, whose thousand-hectare abaca and coconut plantations proliferated in Davao, shared their government’s economic intentions in this colonial mission and enterprise. Planter-owned and operated stores situated on plantation grounds, some located on the foundations of a planter’s house – on the ground floor – sold rice, fish, soap and other goods to laborers, providing necessities on an isolated frontier. 42 The stores’ local importance, as an economic lifeline on the frontier, enabled planters to strike a deal with the Moro Province government for a regular subsidized supply of rice, the most important merchandise in the stores. 43 Fish was the second most sought-after food in plantation stores, as it was the preferred combination for rice. In the Burchfield plantation, many workers “would not eat if there was no fish,” as they ate it almost every day, cooked with a few vegetables in a soup and consumed with heaps of rice. 44

Plantation stores functioned similarly to the government trading posts that collected wild hemp, rubber, gum copal, biao nuts, beeswax, bejuco and other forest products which the hill tribes collected in exchange for rice and other manufactured de
lata. Americans, Europeans, and Filipino planters also sold abaca harvests to the stores. Indigenous plantings of abaca noticeably increased between 1905 and 1907, from 77,000 hills to 150,000 owned by Bagobos and Guiangans. General Bliss described the indigenous tribes who sold abaca to the stores as people taking their “first steps toward becoming a class of peasant proprietors.”

Although these stores also served the colonial policy goals of bringing progress and prosperity to indigenous tribes, the very idea of planter-owned and operated stores supplying a captive market was also a cause for concern by the government. Government officials including General Pershing, criticized the planters for overcharging, and taking advantage of their undue influence over their laborers and their stores’ monopoly on material procurement.

The Davao Planters Association countered these criticisms, claiming that due to the lack of inexpensive transportation, the high losses sustained in landing cargo, and additional costs incurred in provisioning a remote district, required they charge more. The Association further stated that incidents of overcharging by their members were isolated cases and not the norm. The remote nature of the plantations meant that the Association could not adequately police its members, and depended on the discretion and goodwill of each planter. Planters asserted that it was in their best interest to treat laborers fairly considering that labor was scarce. They felt it was important to demonstrate goodwill among the tribes, and in certain cases, rice was sold at cost or for less during a famine. Professing that their main business was agriculture, not trading, planters were content with only a small profit from their stores. Planters, however, allowed a higher mark-up for non-staple articles such as agongs, for they remained longer on shelves unsold.

While plantation stores intensified the commercial culture of money-related exchanges, they also blended Western capitalism with local cultural interests such as selling traditional agongs to indigenous customers. As much as the new practices and tastes replaced old ones, the two-way appropriation came at the expense of the loss of

---

During the late Spanish period, Lumads were introduced to canned goods or de lata, which were prized commodities due to their rarity. (Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 128.)

Agongs, usually gongs made of brass, were circulated widely in certain areas of Mindanao, and used by the people as medium of exchange.
traditional ways and practices. On the one hand, the stores appropriated tribal culture by catering to the specific needs and tastes of their ethnic customers, including the basic necessity of rice and fish, to the central importance of the ceremonial agong. On the other hand, tribes took on the practice of securing food and objects from the plantation store using cash or credit, no longer relying upon their swidden plantings or traditional barter in local markets.

The largest impact the plantation stores brought to the Davao frontier was their role in introducing the practice of paying laborers in kind, or material goods, rather than receiving cash for their labor. It became normal for plantations in the first decade of the twentieth century to pay all wages for clearing, cultivating, and stripping abaca with store sales, as detailed in a 1909 guide for prospective investors in the Davao abaca industry, and reiterated in a 1910 technical monograph on abaca. Modern companies, some incorporated in New York or San Francisco, had to adapt to their indigenous laborer’s world view and tastes, where material objects had more cultural value than the fetish of cash, and thus paid laborers “in rice, cloth and other commodities” procured from the store. Plantation stores encouraged hill peoples to come down to the lowlands and settle in villages built by plantations by offering goods that provided an easier way of life.

Fig. 7.1. Manobo girls having traded onions for soap at a coconut plantation store in Calian, Davao, July 1930. Courtesy of the Charles F. Clagg Photograph Collection (Ph106), University of Massachusetts Amherst.
However, the importance of plantation-store wages fell in the 1920s for several reasons. The arrival of more migrant workers from the Visayas and Japan who came from more cash-based societies, altered the mode of payment towards cash rather than kind when opting for abaca, which was more readily convertible to cash compared to the other end-user store rations. The advent of the *pakyaw* and the auction system also made the commodity-to-cash crossover inevitable. By the 1920s, as the population grew and more entrepreneurial ventures occurred, planter-run stores no longer held a monopoly of provisioning supplies on the Davao frontier, as *tiendas*, worker cooperative stores, and other retail establishments started proliferating.

Even prior to the 1920s, local stores or *tiendas* provided the venue for exchanging culture and ideas in the larger settlements of Davao Province, at the same time that plantation stores were distributing material goods in the frontier communities. In Davao town, the U.S. Army commissary became one of the earliest places for the exchange of commodities between local inhabitants and the Americans, during the first months of U.S. occupation. Townsfolk satisfied their taste and curiosity for *de lata* by purchasing them from the Army store during the early months of 1900. But the practice was soon prohibited due to infrequent deliveries from Zamboanga.\(^57\)

The U.S. Army, however, did not lack alcoholic beverages since they were easily obtained from Visayan residents. Liquor traffic was serious enough that local officials, with support from the Army, issued several orders in the early months of 1900, prohibiting the sale of *tuba* (the local coconut wine), as well as later, “whiskey, gin and other alcoholic drinks” to soldiers. The prohibitions only drove the liquor exchange underground, which necessitated creating a reward of ten pesos “for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person selling or giving *tuba* to the soldiers.”\(^58\)

These ‘mom and pop’ local *tiendas* in the towns, forerunners of the *sari-sari* stores, were among the first business premises to be regulated by occupation forces. Vendors had to register their business and submit a list of their merchandise before they were given a license. Prices of basic necessities, especially foodstuffs, were

---

\(^{57}\) The *pakyaw* and the auction system are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

263
controlled, and a joint inspection by the U.S. Army’s Provost Marshall and the town’s Vice-President took place every two weeks in order to check the accuracy of the weights and measures. Regular sanitation inspections also began among such establishments, with rewards given for cleanliness, and fines imposed on filthy stores. Since *tiendas* selling animals often had stock escape from cages or corrals, soldiers were often busy confiscating strays. Later laws required all livestock to be branded, with penalties imposed on the owner of strays found wandering the streets.\(^59\)

The merchants based in coastal Davao were mostly Spanish, Filipino and Chinese,\(^1\) while itinerant Chinese traders based in other parts of Mindanao often visited the town. These merchants and traders provided the salt, dried fish, and other necessities that highland tribes needed and acquired in exchange, with increasing regularity, for forest products such as beeswax and almaciga.\(^60\) Such traders facilitated the flow of commodities in and out of Davao, but also conducted local trade among the tribes, from one group to another, buying and selling commodities valued by them, such as biao nut or salt.

In the early years of American rule, the traders primarily dealt in rice, which they sold to the locals, but as their customers acquired new tastes, they also hawked Western commodities such as canned salmon by 1910.\(^61\) Lumads knew the suitably named ‘Trading’ as the site where their abaca harvests and forest products could be exchanged for American *de lata*.\(^62\) Canned goods gained a cachet among ethnic and migrant Filipinos for its rarity, high price, and food preservation qualities in an area where fresh meat was relatively common and inexpensive, and electrical appliances for keeping food were lacking.\(^63\)

In a district where local demand for foreign goods was linked to international demand for abaca, some traders invested in agriculture while a number of planters opened retail stores in town as secondary businesses. The Davao Planter’s Association not only dealt with abaca and coconuts but also other plantation crops such as rubber, cacao, coffee, sugarcane, rice, corn, tobacco, as well as tropical commodities including

---
\(^1\) The Chinese population in Davao district listed in the 1903 Census was just 19, while government estimate in 1905 showed a decrease in the Chinese population to just 2. (*Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1904), 284; Capt. Geo T. Langhorne, “Second Annual Report of the Moro Province, Zamboanga, Mindanao, PI, September 1905” (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1905), 35, American Historical Collection.)
sesamum, citronella, almaciga, lumbang oil, nuts, beeswax, rattan and pearl shell. The Spanish-Filipino firm, Matute Hermanos, established in 1903 as a partnership between two Davao-based brothers, ventured into commodity trading aside from their original business in agriculture. One of their cousins, the merchant Amadeo Matute, supplied almaciga to the Chinese of Zamboanga in the 1910s. A decade later, as agricultural ventures in Davao increased, Amadeo operated a trading post, procuring abaca and coconut products from farmers, which he then sold to inter-island steamers that passed by his base on the San Agustin Peninsula on the east coast of Davao.

Chinese immigrants whose general stores retailed necessities such as sugar, rice, and vinegar had commodity trading operations linked to their merchandise business. The Lim brothers, whose primary business was a general store in Santa Cruz, also bought abaca from nearby farms and sold it to big merchant houses in Davao. One brother went into financial services, acting as a guarantor for the loans or advances of local abaca farmers with Anglo-American merchant houses based in Davao town, while another chose to go into the coconut plantation business.

Lebanese Juan Awad, who came to Davao originally as a merchant, became a planter, then returned once more to the retail trade after establishing himself in the abaca industry. With profits derived mainly from his abaca plantation, he personified the merchant’s dream by erecting Mindanao’s tallest building in the 1920s, a multi-story structure that contained his general store. Located on the two busiest streets of Davao, the Awad Building became a landmark in the town and province. Its height caused a sensation, as “children from the forests of the far interior” walked the Davao streets “wide-eyed gazing upward in amazement at sky-scrapers four stories high!”

The career of lady-entrepreneur Rufina Tudtod provides another example that fits into the trader-turned-agriculturist mold. A migrant from Cebu, she came to Davao in 1917 and opened a sari-sari store along one of the town’s thoroughfares, Calle Magallanes. Sharing a set-up similar to Chinese tiendas and American plantation stores, her mini-mart was located on the ground floor below her living quarters. She later opened a bigger merchandise store that specialized in the liquor trade on the outskirts of Guianga, a major abaca center, after having thoroughly familiarized herself with Davao’s economic landscape. She finally embarked upon developing her abaca
plantation business after applying for land and accumulating enough capital to start one. Rufina’s liquor establishment was part of a trend by the 1930s whereby independent retail outlets, operated by Filipino, Japanese and Chinese entrepreneurs, were established in hinterlands that were previously served by government or plantation stores, reflecting the scale of population movement and settlement on a resource frontier in transition.

Plantation stores evolved with the times as the plantations became smaller and ownership more Filipino, with former consumers no longer the captive market of old. Former frontier teacher Vicente Royo from Romblon ran a sari-sari store in Kapalong, catering to the “inhabitants, natives and Christians” in his barrio in the vicinity of his 120 hectare farm which he began in the mid-1920s. In the 1930s, Luzon migrant and Chinese-Tagalog mestizo, Marcelo Antonio, augmented income from his modest six-hectare plantation in Pantukan by also operating a sari-sari store catering to his neighbors.

By the 1930s, independent start-ups vied with established Manila retail companies that opened branches in Davao, with their stores welcoming customers of all nationalities. The prominent Japanese general store chain, Osaka Bazaar, had two branches in the city’s downtown and one in the Japanese enclave of Mintal in the hinterlands. Osaka Bazaar’s main outlet along Legaspi Street became another major attraction in pre-war Davao, selling dry goods made in Japan. The Legaspi branch held special memories for Eustacio Gica who as a young boy went to the store with his father, a migrant from Cebu working for the Davao branch of Ker & Co., to choose his Christmas gift. With Japanese outlets like Osaka Bazaar becoming more active in the retail trade, after Chinese merchants in the Philippines boycotted Japanese goods in the wake of the Manchurian Incident of 1931-1932, Davao Port imports from Japan increased by more than a hundred percent from ₱260,763 in 1932 to ₱558,722 in 1934.

Most Americans, however, and to a lesser extent Filipinos, did not always patronize the Japanese retail stores for a variety of reasons. Partly due to commercial advertising declaring the superiority of American goods, and the actual experiences of

---

1 It was a different thing when Americans were vacationing in Japan, where they bought a lot of Japanese lacquer ware and textiles for themselves, and to give to family and friends.
buying poor quality Japanese-made toys and textile, as well as Japanese stores not retailing Western clothing such as stockings, ties, and socks, American retail outlets provided competition and an alternative. For example, Japanese stores sold American-looking dolls, but their quality left much to be desired, with an American housewife complaining that toys made in Japan “go to pieces the first time” her children played with them. Thus, manufactured goods that came from the United States always meant a lot to residents in Davao, and, as a consequence, there was always a ready market for well-made American goods sold in American stores.

The most prestigious American establishment in Davao was a branch of Manila’s H.E. Heacock department store, which opened its doors to local customers in 1930. Named after its founder from San Francisco who started the company in 1900 selling watches, chains, collar and cuff buttons to American soldiers in Manila, Heacock’s grew under the leadership of Samuel Gaches who also had abaca and coconut plantation interests in Davao. By the time it opened its branch in a reconditioned building in the center of Davao, the store has diversified into tableware, American-made novelties, sporting goods, firearms, photographic supplies, and office appliances.

Mindful of the needs of its clientele in the town as well as outlying agricultural villages, the company sold wedding rings and even statues of Catholic saints through installment payments. Davao Americans who shopped regularly at Heacock’s due to their personal connections with Sam Gaches eventually made the store a venue for catching up on the latest news. In 1941, when the Philippine Commonwealth government restricted resident aliens from sending funds abroad, the sales of Heacock’s and other Davao stores selling American merchandise improved as the importation of American goods increased while those from Japan and China decreased.

Plantation sari-sari stores, liquor retailers, buy-and-sell businesses, Japanese and American chains, along with the many tiendas selling groceries, furniture and textiles in the 1930s continued the role and tradition of the early government trading posts as sites of economic and cultural exchange through circulation of material goods. Among the tiendas were Tung Chong’s, a favorite among young patrons because of its
imported chocolates, and Ang Pang-a’s that sold canned sardines and other dry goods, while Indian stores specializing in textiles provided a cosmopolitan flavor to the city’s retail outlets. A record of establishments engaged in commercial merchandise and retailing in 1936 showed 916 sari-sari stores; 460 tobacco retailers; 160 liquor dealers; 133 merchandise peddlers; 20 drugstores; 15 wholesalers and importers of general merchandise; and 6 abaca and copra export firms operating in a town on the brink of cityhood.

c. Mail-order and other forms of merchandising

The 1930s also saw the advent of mail-order catalogs providing shopping convenience to some migrant residents living on hinterland farms and plantations who originated from more urban settings before settling on Davao’s evolving frontier. In this case, the printed page became a virtual venue for cultural exchange, whereby Davao inhabitants corresponded with Chicago mail-order merchants, procuring American-made clothes, furniture and toys via the Pacific Ocean. Mail-order merchandise travelled in a reverse direction from the golden abaca fiber that was handled by factory workers in New England cordage companies, as opposed to these American manufactured goods processed by Chicago clerks “working at their desks, receiving orders, processing orders, mailing orders,” which then made their transpacific voyage to eagerly waiting households in Davao.

An adequate but slow postal service connected Davao consumers with industrial America through Montgomery Ward, Sears and Roebuck, and even maternity specialist Lane Bryant catalogs. Part and parcel of nineteenth-century rural America, mail-order catalogs found a kindred market a few decades later among families living in the hinterland towns of Davao. With the heyday of their business drawing to a close in the United States, mail-order marketers found a new niche in Davao’s retail trade, and the Chicago giants partnered with local companies to represent their interests in Mindanao. Dutch-American marketing firm, Marsman and Co., represented Sears, while the Frank family distributed on behalf of Montgomery Ward.

The mail-order heyday in the United States between the 1890s and the 1910s, was dominated by Montgomery Ward and Sears, whose headquarters in Chicago strategically served its mostly rural Midwest customers. (Mark R. Wilson, “Mail Order,” Official Website, Encyclopedia of Chicago, (2004), http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/779.html.)
Through mail-order business, American-made short-wave radios, ice boxes (refrigerators) and other electrical appliances found new customers in Davao. The electrical products sold by Montgomery Ward were an ideal fit for the Franks' Davao Light and Power Co., established in 1929 with the future development of Davao in mind. The Davao electric company had a capacity of 230 volts, at a time when most U.S. towns only had 130 volts, and was eager to provide electrical appliances to a locale requiring labor saving devices. Although only 2,250 households (or twelve percent) had a connection to the city's seven electric plants in the 1930s, more houses were being connected to the grid each year. Davao and the Frank businesses were booming, especially when turmoil in Europe raised abaca prices in the late 1930s.

Though mostly a middle and upper class convenience, subscription catalogues provided access to objects otherwise not available in the sari-sari stores and Japanese bazaars of Davao. Warm clothes for a Japanese vacation, gifts for family and friends in the United States, maternity wear and outsized shoes, underwear, bicycles, and stove ovens were ordered by families in Davao. An enterprising housewife even ordered a pressurized canning machine from Sears for a business that bottled mushrooms planted in waste fibers collected from small plantations only too willing to get rid of them.

The transportation and communication networks that linked Davao to the wider world were sufficient to enable mail-order merchandising, but it still took months for packages to arrive, unlike letters which only took days to travel. Customers adjusted to the lengthy time lag in their own ways. Missionary wife Margaret Tong mailed orders in early January so her family would be adequately clothed for an April departure to springtime Japan. An American housewife placed her Christmas orders in September to allow gifts to reach Davao by December, while a Filipino husband allowed more leeway for shipping time, ordering Christmas gifts as early as June. Shoes for a

---

1 An indication of just how good business in Davao was in those days, the Frank family planned to hold on to their Davao interests until the last moment, on the eve of Philippine Independence in 1946, while their other businesses in Jolo and Cotabato were already sold in the 1930s in preparation for their exit from the Philippines. Uncertainty over the political situation, however, made them change their mind, and with much reluctance entered into negotiations with the Aboitiz family in late 1941 to sell Davao Light & Power Co. (Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, June 8, 1941,” June 8, 1941; Patrick Henry Frank, “P.H. Frank to Gen, 7/10/41,” July 10, 1941; Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, July 14, 1941,” July 14, 1941.)
toddler had to be ordered a half size bigger so that they would be a perfect fit by the
time they reached their intended wearer.  

The possibility that orders would not arrive on time was a given, so contingencies
and patience were required. If orders intended for Christmas arrived way past
December 25th, the late packages went into storage until the next Christmas. If the
ordered shoes did not fit, they invariably found a new owner in a thriving second-hand
market of stateside goods. But when attempting to schedule a Sears order in time
for a childbirth that did not happen as planned due to the baby’s premature arrival,
only a dose of humor would suffice. The expectant mother could only say, amidst labor
pains (to the amusement of friends) “but it can’t be – I’m not ready, the order isn’t
here, I haven’t a bed, and his room isn’t fixed[!]”

Besides stateside mail-order merchandising, Manila-based stores also catered to
Davao residents through the post and other means. The Metcalf sisters’ Little Home
Shop in Manila sent Philippine-made textiles, like piña cloth, through the postal
service. Manila Cold Stores delivered fresh peaches, asparagus and oysters via
refrigerated ships. On occasion, Davao residents did not need to go through the
postal service as refrigerated ships brought perishable foodstuffs such as grapefruit,
apples, butter, cottage cheese and celery directly to Davao. Every Thursdays in the
1930s, the Don Isidro, an interisland ship with cold storage facilities, served steak,
cheese and mushrooms to Davao residents in its restaurant from which frozen beef for
home cooking could also be bought.

If the ordered items were large, they were picked up by customers directly from
the pier at Santa Ana. For orders which needed refrigeration, customers collected
them at the cold storage building near the port. Americans who wanted to continue
their Christmas tradition of using real pine trees received Oregon pine transported in
refrigerated containers across the Pacific, put in cold storage in Manila, then shipped
to Davao on refrigerated boats, and placed in the Japanese cold storage where
customers came to pick them up.

d. The case of tinned milk: Appropriating food in Davao’s material culture

The refrigerated ships only brought a small percentage of the fresh food
consumed by Davao residents in the 1930s. The public market supplied local fruits,
vegetables, beef, pork, and chicken, while the sari-sari stores supplied various types of processed food for the consuming public. Grocery items such as evaporated milk, butter, and Del Monte canned fruits were widely available in Davao stores. Fresh meat prices were affordable, while dairy products cost more. A housewife purchased two pounds of beef “with a soup bone thrown in” for only 20 centavos, a big chicken for 25 centavos, but paid ₱1.20 for a pound of butter.

Canned milk was typically substituted for fresh milk, and Americans in Davao had to adapt to its taste, as evaporated milk was “a bit strange at first but can be used in coffee and for cooking and one never detects it.” Based on recipes from a 1920s cookbook used by Protestant missionaries in the Philippines, milk was an important component in home cooking added to soups, fish and meat dishes in the form of sauces and gravy. It was also an essential ingredient in desserts such as pudding, cake, and ice cream.

The availability of canned milk on the shelves of Davao grocery stores enabled housewives to make desserts from their provinces of origin without much difficulty. For example, a housewife from Negros, made in her Santa Ana kitchen, the Spanish-inspired barquillos wafers, whose main ingredients were flour, butter, eggs, sugar, and milk. Filipino and American ladies concocted the famous Philippine dessert leche flan, or what the Americans called custard, using eggs from backyard poultries or public markets, and milk, whether evaporated or condensed, from the groceries. Leche flan’s reputation as a quintessential Filipino dessert made American missionary Margaret Tong learn to make it, along with the sugar and coconut candy bukayo, to befriend Filipino women in her community.

On the other hand, Davao Filipino residents acquired the taste for cakes and ice cream, which Americans often served at gatherings. Social eating was encouraged by what was taught in the Practical Arts classes of the public schools where Grade 1 students learned that canned condensed milk had greater nutritional benefits than carabao’s milk, and young girls learned how to bake cakes. Social and institutional practices ensured that American baked cakes took their place alongside bico rice cakes, ensaymadas and leche flan on the table of Filipino desserts. In town, light fluffy cakes such as sponge cakes and angel food cakes were served at social
gatherings, during birthdays, baby showers, and church meetings, while fruit cakes were made for weddings and Christmas. On hinterland plantations, a neighbor sending a cake on a special occasion was a common practice not only in 1910, when the Coles celebrated their anniversary in Davao, but also in 1933 when a child of a Cebuana migrant and an American planter received a chocolate birthday cake from their neighbor in 1933.

![Fig.7.2. Cake for a child’s birthday party in the 1930s. Courtesy of Vincent Garcia.](image)

In many ways, the use of milk in traversing tastes and cultures in Davao supports Doreen Fernandez’s notion as to what makes foreign influences in food Filipino:

“The history and society that introduced and adapted them; the people who tuned them to their tastes and accepted them into their homes and restaurants, and especially the harmonizing culture that combined them into contemporary Filipino fare.”

The Filipino street snack of halo-halo perhaps best exemplified this cultural exchange and mingling of tastes. Also called mongo-ya, or mongo con hielo, it was an inexpensive treat, costing one centavo plain, and three centavos with an ice cream topping. Its sparing use of milk made it affordable, with just a dash of evaporated milk. 

---

Sponge cakes may do without milk, but chocolate cakes always had milk in them.
milk to bring out the flavors of the syrup-preserved mongo, garbanzo and kidney beans to complement the coolness of the shaved-ice. In town, the Kansendo Sweet Mongo Shop on San Pedro Street, and the Uedo Sweet Mongo Shop on Claveria Street specialized in this refreshment. The fact that the Japanese specialized in a delicacy that contained Filipino, Spanish, Japanese and American tastes and ingredients, showed how the cultures of the multi-ethnic peoples of Davao converged in this popular street snack or merienda.

In Davao homes, the use of various forms of milk depended on conditions of supply, cultural tastes, and beliefs in what is good for children’s health. Money spent for evaporated milk reached P10 weekly in one American household in 1932, outstripping other food expenses. When the war in Europe and Japanese aggression in China increased the price of milk by nearly half in 1940, the same family shifted to lower-cost powdered milk. At the same time, Filipino children, including those in Davao, acquired a taste for Lactogen powdered milk. Developed in Swiss laboratories to reproduce the nutritional formula of mother’s milk, Lactogen had created a growing market in the Philippines since it was introduced there by The Nestle and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company in the 1920s.

Americans, among all the nationalities in Davao, were the most concerned with the regular drinking of fresh cow’s milk. The developing scarcity of milk was one of the major factors for the Frank brothers to send their wives and young children to the United States on the eve of the Pacific War. It was the fear of a blockade that would cut-off the supply of imported milk, even more than a question of America’s capacity to defend the Philippines, that made the Franks decide to repatriate their women and children, while the men remained in Davao to attend to business.

2. Bringing the world to Davao

The nature of markets and the movement of goods demonstrate not only the flow and circulation of material objects from foreign points of origin, but also the trajectory of ideas associated with the goods as they were consumed and used by Davao residents. Manufactured objects made in the United States entered a particularly Davao milieu, and became local in character and use as Lumads,
Hispanized Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Americans, and Europeans consumed them while living on a developing Mindanao frontier under American rule. Aside from taste, consumption patterns involved a gamut of sensory experiences, including the visual, audio, and tactile, that influenced consumer mindsets and lifeways. As Davao consumers read magazines, watched movies, listened to music or the news, and operated machines to create materials for their homes and lifestyles, their perceptions about other people and places were affected as if they, and not the goods, had traveled to other lands too. But because these sensory experiences occurred in a Davao context, these foreign, mostly American, sights and sounds were experienced through the medium of a local setting.

a. The visual allure of magazines and movies

Magazines complemented the world wide nature of mail-order catalogs, and unlike dry goods, were explicit vehicles of American mores, ideas and fashion. Magazine subscriptions could be readily acquired in Davao, much like they were in the United States. Filipino homes and families obtained glimpses of American and European culture through photographic magazines and newspapers like *Life*, *Reader’s Digest*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, that fascinated readers with vistas of snow-capped mountains and human-interest stories set in the United States and other foreign locales. Filipino women used American magazines to learn about new fashions, and acquire new tastes. *The Ladies Home Journal* magazine became a source for American recipes adapted to Filipino taste, culminating in the cookbook *Everyday Cookery for the Home* published in 1930. Co-written by Sofia Reyes de Veyra, Dean of the Domestic Science Department of Centro Escolar de Senoritas and Maria Paz Zamora Mascunana of the Philippine magazine, *Woman’s Home Journal*, the cookbook emphasized the science behind cooking, a basic message carried over from the curriculum of the public schools to Filipino dining tables.

Even Filipino magazines, such as the weekly *Liwayway*, or the *Philippines Free Press* newspaper, read in many Davao homes were not immune from the influence of Western culture brought to the Philippines through its advertisement pages. Product placements for Coca-cola soft drinks, Libby’s canned meat, Del Monte tinned fruits, Heinz catsup and Lea & Perrins sauces, as well as overseas news, shared space with Tagalog stories and poetry, Philippine news, ads for Filipino movies and local brands,
such as Ang Tibay shoes, in the pages of Liwayway magazine. The magazine’s Filipino serials provided story-telling material for a mother to regale children gathered around the bed in the quiet of Davao evenings. While during the day, her children laughed at the antics of Kengkoy as he pathetically tried to keep up with American fashion and English slang, and marveled at Kulafu’s Tarzan-like exploits in the magazine’s comics section.

Expatriate American women depended on lifestyle magazines to inform their decisions on what clothes or furniture to order from the United States. But such American magazines also inadvertently accentuated the fact that they lacked many material objects their contemporaries enjoyed in the U.S., as they perused the pages of the magazines and wished for particular stateside goods that even mail-order catalogs cannot provide. Fran Frank felt materially deprived in comparison to her sister living in Austin, Texas:

You are lucky to be where you can buy things for [your house], even if you have to wait a while before buying. Here, I just wish for things, and never have them; such things as nice pictures, pretty pots for vines etc.

Lack of material things aside, American magazines helped define the boundaries of propriety of certain groups in Davao society by the images and messages conveyed toward specific markets and consumers. Where twelve percent of the 1939 Davao Province population read newspapers and magazines regularly, proper ladies were expected to read Good Housekeeping which contained conservative articles on

---

9 Kengkoy was a funny slick-haired character dressed in the baggy pants and double-breasted suit of Jazz Age fashion. He was written in Tagalog mixed with English words in phonetic Philippine spelling, and whose misadventures revolved around his attempts to win the hand of his inamorata, Rosing, characterized as the demure traditional Filipina. Created by Tony Velasquez and Romualdo Ramos in 1929, Kengkoy had become part of twentieth century Philippine popular culture. (Dennis Villegas, “Kengkoy: Biography of a Pop Icon,” Cultural blog, PilipinoKomiks: Looking Back at the Rich History of the Filipino Comics Tradition, (November 26, 2005), http://pilipinokomiks.blogspot.com.au/2005/11/kenkoy-biography-of-pop-icon.html.) Consequently, Soledad Reyes has remarked that Kengkoy and his friends “delineated the foibles of the age, its fashion and lifestyle and the inevitable clash between tradition and modernity.” (Ramon R. Marcelino, ed., “Romance and Realism in the Komiks,” in A History of Komiks of the Philippines and Other Countries (Quezon City: Islas Filipinas Publishing Co., Inc., 1985), 48.)

10 Kulafu’s storyline and appearance were influenced by American Edgar Rice Burrough’s Tarzan, with elements of Philippine folklore mixed-in as it was set in the jungles of pre-Spanish southern Philippines. Kulafu first saw print in 1933, a creation of Francisco Reyes. (Patrick D. Flores, ed., “Lodestar & Legend,” in The Life and Art of Francisco Coching (Quezon City: Vibal Foundation, Inc. and Francisco V. Coching Foundation, 2010), 50; Cynthia Roxas and Joaquin Arevalo Jr., A History of Komiks of the Philippines and Other Countries, ed. Ramon R. Marcelino (Quezon City: Islas Filipinas Publishing Co., Inc., 1985), 67.)
women’s fashion, home decorating and cooking tips, as well as religious poetry, short stories, and serialized novels.\textsuperscript{138} Reader’s Digest subscribers were busy, practical people who wanted to be informed about the global issues of the day and the United States’ role on the world stage.\textsuperscript{139} Because magazines catered to particular markets, Davao readers learned to be discriminating in their choice of what to read, or at least, what the public perceived they read. A Filipino wife still read a magazine of her choice, even if society expected otherwise from the spouse of a pastor.

The other day I dropped into [the pastor’s] house quite by surprise. On the table in the front room was McFadden’s “interesting,” sexual magazine, “True Confessions.” His wife grabbed it but not before I saw it.\textsuperscript{140}

Although W.H. Fawcett, not Bernarr McFadden, had published True Confessions, both publishers churned out pulp magazines widely read by low-income women in the United States, offering personal advice in the form of fiction and editorial content. Fawcett’s True Confessions claimed it was “edited for the young working class woman, and includes personal life stories; subjects are based on the American working class way of life.”\textsuperscript{141} Davao’s majority working class population fit comfortably within the magazine’s target audience, including the pastor’s wife.

Another working class pastime that Davao residents came to enjoy was going to the movies. Visually more powerful than magazines, a movie took hold of the viewer’s imagination as it brought another world almost within reach. For a town that depended upon global markets, movies were another media vehicle that temporarily transported Davao inhabitants to other parts of the world that they knew existed and were eager to learn about. Young local residents had their first glimpse of a foreign world at the cine, while expatriates momentarily reconnected with the places they left behind. Like most manufactured goods, movies made their transpacific journey from the United States to the Philippines, screening first in Manila, before reaching viewers in Davao often more than a year after its initial release in America.

Jerry Roscom who came with the U.S. occupation forces in 1901, established the first movie house in Davao and aptly named it the Liberty Theatre. Silent films were shown at night, accompanied by a small group of musicians playing drums, violin, and a piano. The band played fast tempos during chase scenes in American Westerns, and played sad songs in dramas.\textsuperscript{142} To market the films, a small truck decorated with
movie posters carried the playing band around town during the day. The lively music announced the vehicle’s approach to townspeople who would rush to their windows to look for the movie truck and information on what movie was showing that night.143

By the 1920s, silent films had given way to talkies. The first talking picture, *The Jazz Singer*, was shown at the Liberty Theatre to a capacity crowd, with parents bringing their children along.144 A scene in the movie led one distraught boy to cry out in fright when a singing Al Jolson in black face make-up ran towards the camera. The unusual viewing experience and the new sounds had frightened the young viewer into thinking that a black and white alien was going to seize him, while his mother tried to comfort him by saying, ”*cine lang yan, (it’s only a movie).*”145

Map 7.1. Downtown Davao, early 1940s.146

The arrival of talkies and the growth of a cashed-up migrant population in the town and outlying areas added more movie houses to Davao’s populated centers. Cine Esperanza, named after the Filipino wife of Juan Awad, was opened at the Awad Building in the 1920s, while in the mid-1930s, Luzon businessmen, Pedro S. Carriedo and his son-in-law Pedro Lat, operated five movie theaters in Davao town and its
hinterlands, including the Liberty, which Carriedo bought from Roscom.\textsuperscript{147} Lat’s downtown cinemas had the American names Ideal and Radio, while the hinterland theaters in Calinan and Toril, bore the names of Philippine mountains, Apo and Mayon, respectively. Residents in outlying towns without movie houses could still avail of the Traveling Show that provided similar entertainment “around the province of Davao.”\textsuperscript{148} The Radio was considered the most modern theatre in Davao in the late 1930s, while in 1941, Davao cinemas were utilizing the most recent sound equipment and showing movies just a few months delayed from its initial U. S. run.\textsuperscript{149}

The cost of movies, at 20 centavos for adults and 10 centavos for children, were considered a mid-priced entertainment by Filipino movie lovers from different walks of life and of all ages.\textsuperscript{150} The price was considered reasonable since the entry fee was only paid once, while viewers could re-watch the movie over again to their hearts’ content. The entrance price was a small fraction of a household help’s monthly salary of P3.00 to P5.00, who viewed a favorite film several times during her day-off.\textsuperscript{151} Matron Mercedes Pichon attended Tagalog film screenings for an hour or so every month, with her children in tow.\textsuperscript{152} Updated by \textit{Liwayway} magazine on upcoming Filipino movies, the mother and children witnessed Filipino artists Fernando Poe Sr., Carmen Rosales, Elsa Moreno, Mila del Sol, Flor de Jasmin, or Leopoldo Salcedo act in various comedy, romance, drama, musical and adventure scenes once the films reached Davao. The power of a film upon a child’s imagination kept Mercedes’ daughter awake one night after watching a horror movie.\textsuperscript{153}

While interactions with Americans were rare, Filipino children experienced the frontier West of the imagination in the movie houses. Young boys walked along tree-lined streets to the cinema to save money, so they could repeatedly watch Western serials like \textit{Rin Tin Tin} or \textit{The Lone Ranger}, and sci-fi films with American heroes such as \textit{Buck Rogers} or \textit{Flash Gordon}.\textsuperscript{154} By the 1930s, movie houses offered discounted fares to children, charging five centavos for orchestra seats and ten centavos for a spot on the balcony.\textsuperscript{155} Because serial films played out in chapters in the course of a week, a grade-schooler would even skip classes to follow particular stories to their conclusion.\textsuperscript{156}
Busy grown-ups found time for movies as both a social and personal event. For a young nurse, Fely Campo, movies were an occasional past time watched during off-duty hours with friends, and when with a suitor, chaperoned by her younger sister. Those films that remained strongly in her memory was the American civil war epic *Gone with the Wind* and the musicals of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. Young American couple Walter and Margaret Tong went as often as their missionary duties and schedule allowed. The Tongs, with friends or just the two of them, enjoyed the sports comedy *Elmer the Great*, the romantic musical *It’s a Date*, and the dramas *The Match King* and *Cavalcade* during the 1930s. The Frank brothers and their circle of friends, who mostly worked for American and British export firms, were also regular movie-goers, even encountering the Tongs at the cinema watching *It’s a Date*. Their usual practice was to eat light snacks then go to a movie, as Sam Frank wrote:

Tonight is Teresa’s tea at the club and after that will probably see ... Ann Sheridan at the Ideal. Doesn’t that sound just like Davao to you?

Especially after their families left for the United States on the eve of the Second World War, the brothers watched even more movies to stamp out the loneliness. Pat Frank was so taken with Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier in *Pride and Prejudice* that he saw the film three times.

A July 1940 newspaper advertisement of the movies in Davao’s three theatres showed they catered to a cosmopolitan crowd. There were two Tagalog films, *Princesa ng Kumintang* and *Tawag ng Bayan*, one Chinese-language film, and eleven Hollywood films set in various locales. Of the American films, three were Westerns, including the pertinently titled *Pioneers of the Frontier* set in the American southwest, one of the three adventure serials had London as a backdrop, and one of the three dramas took place in the Chinatown of an American city.

Going to the movies had become so ingrained among some Davao inhabitants that it could even mark a rite of passage. One American lady in her last term of pregnancy even managed to finish a Friday night movie, before being rushed to the hospital to give birth a few hours later. A film could even inspire a Filipino couple to name their first child after Janet Gaynor’s character in the romantic comedy *Merely Mary Ann*. While Hispanized into Maria Ana in her baptismal certificate, their eldest daughter nevertheless came to be called Mary Ann by family and friends.
b. The wonder of sound machines: Phonographs and radios

During the first half of the twentieth century, phonographs, also called gramophones, became popular. They were objects of excitement for music lovers when they first became available in Davao because of their recent invention, and as an explicit sign of modernity.\(^{165}\) As modern mechanical objects of entertainment, phonographs complemented traditional musical instruments, such as guitars and pianos found in Filipino households. Phonographs provided the recorded music for large family gatherings based upon tunes from the piano and guitar for singing and dancing.\(^{166}\) However, the phonograph and its records still needed human intervention when things did not work properly, as one old timer’s memoir revealed:

I still recall when the unbreakable\(^q\) record was invented. It was a sort of plastic plate that was pliable and not evenly made. Worst, its hole did not fit the peg on the turntable. We adjusted it by putting a rubber band to tighten it.\(^{167}\)

The new ease and convenience of producing music, often from other parts of the world, and in another language, made phonographs cherished household objects. Phonographs kept crying children entertained, while a young boy in Mintal learned to change the needle by himself so he could listen to his parent’s records of European music without assistance.\(^{168}\) A Cebu migrant in Padada regularly took her Victrola apart to clean it, piece by piece, and patiently put it back together again so she can listen to her favorite American tunes without problems.\(^{169}\) In Santa Ana, a Negrense family’s devotion to opera played from the gramophone inspired a daughter to be named Lucy, after Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor.\(^{170}\) Settlers from Aklan living on the Davao frontier listened to the Visayan lament *Ay ay kalisod* sung by Lita Fuentes, a familiar voice from childhood, on the phonograph.\(^{171}\) In the same manner, Japanese songs wafting along the streets of Mintal at night evoked memories of home, as families listened to familiar sounds of music before sleeping.\(^{172}\)

Phonographs\(^k\) during the first two decades were ordered directly from Manila, bought from an itinerant peddler, or personally brought to Davao by settlers during

---

\(^q\) Flexible or unbreakable records were 78 rpm discs that first came out in the 1900s made by American, British and German manufacturers. Several new types of flexible discs were introduced in the early 1930s, the popular ones being Durium coated brown paper and vinyl-based discs from RCA Victor.

\(^k\) Phonographs became available in the Philippines as early as the 1880s. (Elizabeth L. Enriquez, *Appropriation of Colonial Broadcasting: A History of Early Radio in the Philippines, 1922-1946* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2009), 45.)
their move there. In the 1930s, as more Manila-based stores opened branches in Davao, phonographs became readily available through Erlanger & Galinger (the largest phonograph distributor in the Philippines), Heacock’s, and Davao Light and Power Company. Complementing its phonograph business, Erlanger & Galinger sold Philippine opera and zarzuela records as well as Western recordings under the Victor label in competition with Beck, which distributed Columbia records. Records produced in the Philippines during the American era were already, from the standpoint of sound, “hybrids of music” that were based on standard American musical forms, but with Filipino enunciation of English, namely the mixing of English, Filipino and Spanish translations of English songs, or local compositions in English.

Radios also gained popularity after the First World War and came to complement, and often replace, the older phonograph because of its additional use as a source of news besides playing music. Phonograph distributors deftly carried radio sets in their inventory and even entered the broadcasting business to market their merchandise, as demonstrated by the corporate actions of Erlanger & Galinger, Heacock’s, and Beck in the interwar years. By the 1930s, the Philippines had one of the most advanced radio broadcasting facilities in Asia, and globally market-sensitive Davao was one of the radio’s primary audiences.

Radio technology largely owed its development to the American and British navies which used it for military purposes before private communications companies, often with government coordination and assistance, adapted the technology for commercial uses after the Great War. In Davao, radios helped strengthen the region’s global connections, as households were exposed to an array of programs from Europe, Asia, and the Americas through short wave frequencies that spanned distance in the shortest time. Faraway places were suddenly within earshot of the bedside, and foreign events and languages were heard for the first time. On her first radio night, Midwesterner Frances Frank listened with interest, hearing the Russian language spoken for the first time as it accompanied news on the Manchurian Crisis, while listening on succeeding nights brought her to China and Saigon.

Like the Franks, countless other residents made listening to the radio a daily habit. Filipino and Japanese agriculturists listened to the radio for current abaca prices,
the weather report, and world events that might affect the abaca market, while for others, regular radio programs provided new songs and dramas for enjoyment every week. 181 Listeners to KGEI station, especially the young, imagined the United States as a land of prosperity, science and technology, not only because its regular programs came across the Pacific via the invisible airwaves but also due to its place of broadcast, Treasure Island, San Francisco. 182 KGEI, formed to showcase General Electric’s engineering prowess, often played upbeat American tunes such as Anchors Aweigh and aired weekend programs broadcasting letters to and from American missionaries and explorers in Asia, Africa, and Antarctica. 183

During weeknights, Davao listeners became totally familiar with American household brands as they were entertained in their living rooms and bedrooms by Jack Benny for the Jell-O Program, Bob Hope for the Pepsodent Show, and the Philip Morris crime drama series. 184 Those who could not afford to purchase a radio went to the town plaza to listen to the communal set for the daily news during the morning or music in the afternoons. In front of the San Pedro church, people sat on benches around the public radio which had a custom-built wooden stand to protect it from the elements. 185

By the 1930s, objects created by science and technology had brought Davao’s inhabitants much closer to the wider world their abaca products regularly reached. Radios, gramophones, movies, magazines, and canned milk brought home to them the meaning of the foreign, through the individual’s sensory experience of sound, sight, and taste. Touch and skill, as signified by the sewing machine, was another basic sensation – tactile – that chronicled encounters between local peoples and foreign goods and material culture. The sewing machine was utilized to a large extent by Davao inhabitants as a creative practical instrument, becoming almost indispensable to an emergent frontier population whose need for material goods was tempered by the cost entailed and distance from their source of manufacture. The sewing machine made it possible to bridge aspects of this gap by enabling locals to fashion their own clothing and furnishings. And when it came to naming sewing machines, Davao inhabitants just referred to it as the “Singer.” 186
c. The case of Singer: Localizing a multinational on the Davao frontier

Like the appliqué\(^5\) it helped housewives create, the Singer story in Davao was about global-local encounters that produced new cultural forms and objects on a multi-ethnic frontier. The Singer Company, much-experienced in multi-national markets, had been selling sewing machines in the Philippines from the late nineteenth century. In the 1920s, the Philippines was a principal market for Singer in Asia, having more sales per capita than the Ottoman Empire, Japan, or India.\(^{187}\)

Singer Company’s innovative marketing strategy and extensive support services compensated for its product’s relatively expensive price tag, due to a near-uniform rate structure in all its markets.\(^{188}\) For example, the 66-1-3 model was selling for ₱170 in the 1920s when most Davao laborers earned no more than ₱35 a month.\(^{189}\) However, with its monthly payment schemes, a family could afford a less-expensive machine, like Model 15-88,\(^1\) with only a ₱50 down payment, and installments of ₱20 a month.\(^{190}\) On the other hand, if a brand new machine was beyond a family’s means, second-hand Singer units could be acquired in Davao for ₱86, or in some cases, rented, or borrowed from neighbors, creating a community network around ownership of the machine.\(^{191}\)

The personal attention given to customers by the company’s 950-strong national sales force in the 1930s was a major factor in Singer’s popularity in a country where face-to-face interaction was so necessary. As pioneers in direct door-to-door selling, Singer representatives travelled around Davao visiting housewives, home marketing the machine, and regularly collecting payments.\(^{192}\) Singer salesmen were expected to uphold the highest standards of character, and the New York headquarters went to great lengths to safeguard their reputation by centralizing procedures and through regular monitoring of employees.\(^{193}\) Thus, it was not surprising to learn that a Davao pastor attributed his experience as a Singer salesman to shaping his ability to minister to the needs of his flock.\(^{194}\)

---

\(^{5}\) The Oxford online dictionary defines the term “appliqué” as ornamental needlework in which pieces of fabric are sewn or stuck on to a larger piece to form a picture or pattern. (“Applique,” Oxford Living Dictionaries (Oxford University Press, 2017), https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/applique.)

\(^{1}\) In production between 1933 and 1941.
Singer agents through the course of their jobs entered not only the living rooms of Filipinos but also their lives, forging contacts and contracts, and in the process, understanding the personal needs and circumstances of customers, in order to gain their trust. Through their salespeople on the ground, the company routinely adapted to their customer’s cultural needs, which explained its success in international markets despite increasing difficulties in the home market.\textsuperscript{195}

Living on an evolving frontier, distant from Manila and other commercial centers meant scarcity of choice for clothes and home furnishings for Davao’s cosmopolitan population, hence they appreciated the usefulness of the sewing machine. It was a practical household instrument in a developing town that still retained its agricultural character, yet catered to the modern material tastes and aspirations of men and women.

Hinterland households enjoyed the novelty of the machine being able to function without electricity. Rural housewives made simple clothing for their families, in particular for the children who quickly outgrew their clothes and whose varied sizes could not be found in Davao stores.\textsuperscript{196} Guided by designs from existing clothes or sewing patterns ripped from magazines or bought from stores, local women fabricated underwear, night gowns, dresses, and basic trousers with their dependable sewing machines often located in the corner of their homes.\textsuperscript{197} For making more complicated designs, town residents took textiles and trimming bought from Japanese, Chinese or Indian stores to the homes and shops of dressmakers or tailors. Their sewing machines, handled with expert care, created maternity gowns, dinner dresses, and sturdy men’s trousers.\textsuperscript{198} Movies and magazines often informed Davao residents about fashion styles, but often several months behind the latest trend. In 1940, young Sammy Frank wanted his trousers done in the “Tom Sawyer” style after seeing the 1938 movie in one of the Davao theaters.\textsuperscript{199}

Beside clothes, the sewing machine was indispensable for creating linens for the home.\textsuperscript{200} Broadening the range of products beyond clothes, the Singer Company offered free lessons in Davao to the “women who sew,” where an expert seamstress taught embroidery and appliquéd techniques for fashioning curtains, table cloths, runners, and pillowcases out of plain fabric.\textsuperscript{201} The company-sponsored class allowed
women to bring their children, a welcome benefit for mothers in a town where house helpers were difficult to obtain. But it was also an inspired gesture. As children witnessed their mothers learning to handle the machines and listened to the hum of their motors, the class ensured that the familiarity with the device was passed down to the next generation.

Fig.7.3. The Monteverde-Tionko sisters at home, February 1940. Courtesy of the Santiago Artiaga Collection. 202

The free Singer demonstration in Davao highlighted the techniques of machine embroidery, building on the ideal of embroidery as an honorable woman’s craft, especially important in the Spanish tradition. Like the appliqué the machine produced, the cultural impact of Singer’s multinational reach is visible in a 1940 photo (Fig. 7.3) of a Davao living room filled with embroidered linens on the piano, chairs, and table. In the photograph, the pieces of cloth show the embroidered initials of the lady of the house, a practice observed in Spain and actively supported by the Singer branch in Spain until the early twentieth century, that could look equally ‘at home’ in a Spanish living room. 203 However, a further look reminds viewers that the setting is multi-
cultural Davao, for aside from the Sino-Filipino subjects in the photograph, the embroidered items are displayed with Mindanao brassware, Mickey Mouse dolls, Japanese figurines, and Chinese vases.

As much as the embroidered items were family heirlooms, the machine responsible for their creation was equally valued. The beautiful wooden sewing machine case, often inlaid with shells, rendered it an elegant piece of furniture, and combined with its basic utility, was accorded a special place in the household, including a special spot in another photo. The central position the sewing machine occupied in a portrait of a Japanese family in Davao conveyed its crucial importance to the household, as the members treated it like kin. The familial value placed on the sewing machine had an almost universal appeal, and cut across national lines, even in times of war. A few days after Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese in Davao were placed in prison camps, a Bagobo family, taking pity on their Japanese neighbor, carried their neighbor’s sewing machine to their house to prevent the object from being stolen.

Adding to the sensory experience of handling and operating a sewing machine, this wartime neighborly gesture showed how the machine directly touched Davao lives and broke down ethnic and communal boundaries.

The different objects discussed in this chapter, highlighted by the cases of canned milk and the sewing machine, illustrate the phenomenon of adaptation on an evolving agricultural frontier. The objects catering to the senses of sight, sound, palate, and touch, show how borrowing certain aspects of foreign material culture and incorporating them into Filipino practices created new habits, tastes, or expressions of friendship. The particular examples of this chapter are part of a broader attempt to

---

1 The photo itself reflects the phenomenon of cultural exchange in Davao, with various objects representing different places of origin or inspiration, converging and mingling in a Filipino home.

2 The importance placed in a Singer sewing machine by multi-national families in Davao appears in contrast to the difficulty of marketing Singer machines in Japan, and an indication of Davao’s embrace of the American brand. Gordon (2008) argues that selling singers in Japan failed mainly because Singer catered to a limited elite market, and the adoption of western dress was not widespread in Japan during the first three decades of the twentieth century. However, the Japanese living in Davao at the same period were less affluent than the elite women Singer targeted in Japan. Moreover, the Japanese in Davao took pains to blend in, thus, used more western clothes than in Japan. While Singer-Japan’s narrow focus on affluent customers hurt its performance in that country, it did pave the way for the success of Singer in Davao through aspirational tendencies among the wives of Japanese farmers in Davao. (Andrew Gordon, “Selling the American Way: The Singer Sales System in Japan, 1900-1938,” Business History Review 82, no. 4 (December 4, 2008): 672.)
study the Davao region’s emerging identity as a cosmopolitan yet Filipino space. The next chapter studies these cosmopolitan spaces in more details.

2 Peter Burke, Cultural Hybridity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 93.
5 Gloria, The Bagobos: Their Ethnohistory and Acculturation, 85.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 2.
10 John P. Finley, “A Synopsis of the Progressive Development of the Moro Province” n.d., 6, John P. Finley Papers, United States Army and Heritage Center.
16 Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 129.
20 Gowing, Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920, 228.
Capt. Hunter Liggett, “Report of Captain Liggett to the Adjutant General, Department of Mindanao and Jolo, Zamboanga, P.I.” (Post of Davao, P.I.: U.S. Army, December 31, 1900), 2; ibid., Appendix K.

Appendix K in Liggett, “Report of Captain Liggett to the Adjutant General, Department of Mindanao and Jolo, Zamboanga, P.I.”

Ibid.


Ibid.


Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 129.

Alma Fajardo Borja, Interview with Alma Fajardo Borja, May 21, 2015.


E. Matute et. al vs. A. Matute, No. G.R. No. L-42626 (December 21, 1935).

A. Matute vs. Cheong Boo, No. G.R. L-11109 (Supreme Court January 7, 1918).


Braulio Lim, Interview with Braulio Lim, May 2, 2015, Audio, May 2, 2015.

Ibid.


Frank C. Laubach, “Mindanao, Island of Romance” (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1928), 5, Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.

Rufina Tudtod, “Testimony of Rufina Todtod before Ass. Public Lands Inspector at the Office of the Bureau of Lands, Davao, Davao,” July 18, 1934, 1, Rufina Tudtod Folder, Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.

Laurel, Del Rosario and Sabido, “Petition on Rufina Tudtod Land Case” 1934, 1.


Macario D Tiu, Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory (Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005), 133.

Yoshio Tanaka, “Little Tokyo in a Dream (Mintal),” Map, (n.d.), Private Collection of Michaelangelo E. Dakudao; Monina Suarez Magallanes, Sang Una... (Once upon a Time) (Davao City, Philippines: Monina Suarez Magallanes, 2011), 188–89.

Lucy Ebro Pelayo, Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.


Jorge Ledesma, Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015; Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Family in the U.S., December 29, 1933,” December 29, 1933.

Tong, “Margaret to Mother, Dec. 27, 1934.”

The earliest date when Davao appeared in Heacock advertisements is November 1930. “H.E. Heacock Company,” American Chamber of Commerce Journal, November 1930.

Anonymous, “Mr. and Mrs. Gaches....,” American Chamber of Commerce Journal, May 1926, 9.


Madeline Zack Otis, Regarding Davao, interview by Russel Frank, September 3, 1976, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University; Magallanes, Sang Una... (Once upon a Time), 161; Crecencio Tuballa, “Short History of the Church of Lupon, Davao Oriental” April 1969, Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus.
88 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, August 23, 1941,” August 23, 1941.
89 Lizada, Song-Awun Sa Dabaw, 158; Leticia Pichon Militante, Interview with Mrs. Leticia Pichon Militante, Audio, June 18, 2015.
92 Ibid., 57.
93 Pat Frank, Pat Frank memories, interview by Russel Frank, Audio, 1983 1981, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.
94 Ibid.
96 Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Alice, Jan. 8, 1934,” January 8, 1934; Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, May 4, 1935,” May 4, 1935; Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother and Family, October 27, 1934,” October 27, 1934; Roberto L. Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao, May 7, 2015, Davao City; Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.
97 Madeline Zack Otis, Regarding Davao, interview by Russel Frank, September 3, 1976, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.
98 Tong, “Margaret to Alice, Jan. 8, 1934.”
99 Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Sister and Roger, Jan. 9, 1940,” January 9, 1940; Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao.
100 Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, Undated,” 1934.
101 Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao.
102 Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, April 11, 1940,” April 11, 1940.
103 Rose Jones, “Rose Jones to Gen, July 21, 1941,” July 21, 1941, Emory University.
104 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, November 17, 1941,” November 17, 1941.
105 Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Mother, 1935,” June 1935.
106 Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Alice, Mar. 5, 1934,” March 5, 1934.
107 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, April 17, 1941,” April 17, 1941; Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, July 21, 1941,” July 21, 1941.
108 Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao.
109 Samuel B. Frank, Samuel B. Frank Interviews, interview by Russel Frank, January 28, 1990, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.
111 Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Family Members, December 15, 1932,” December 15, 1932, Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.
112 Tong, “Margaret to Her Aunts, Uncles and Grandmother, Dec. 31, 1931.”
114 Lucy Ebro Pelayo, Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.
115 Tong, “Margaret Tong to Family Members, December 15, 1932”; Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Her Mother, October 10, 1934,” October 10, 1934.


149 Anonymous, “Fate Kind to Davao Citizen,” 27; Rose Jones, “Rose Jones to Fran, July 11, 1941,” July 11, 1941, Frank Family Papers, Emory University.


152 Pichon Militante, Interview with Mrs. Leticia Pichon Militante.

153 Ibid.

154 Julian Rodriguez Jr., Interview with Julian Rodriguez, Jr., June 8, 2015, Audio, June 8, 2015; Jorge Ledesma, Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015.

155 Ledesma, Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015.

156 Rodriguez, Interview with Julian Rodriguez, Jr., June 8, 2015.

157 Campos Yap, Interview with Felicitas Campos Yap.

158 Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Her Mother, July 27, 1934,” July 27, 1934; Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Her Mother, Feb. 27, 1935,” February 27, 1935; Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Her Mother, April 4, 1935,” April 4, 1935; Margaret Tong, “Margaret to Alice, June 21, 1941,” June 21, 1941.

159 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, Jun 16, 1941,” June 16, 1941.

160 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, April 27, 1941,” April 27, 1941.

161 Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, July 21, 1941,” July 21, 1941.


164 Monina Suarez Magallanes, *Sang Una... (Once upon a Time)* (Davao City, Philippines: Monina Suarez Magallanes, 2011), 163–64.

165 Lizada, *Sang-Awyn Sa Dabaw*, 150.

166 Rodriguez, Interview with Julian Rodriguez, Jr., June 8, 2015; Tessie Lizada, Interview with Tessie Lizada, September 29, 2015.

167 Lizada, *Sang-Awyn Sa Dabaw*, 150.

168 Jones, “Rose Jones to Fran, July 11, 1941”; Roberto L. Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao, May 7, 2015, Davao City.

169 Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.

170 Lucy Ebro Pelayo, Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.

171 Elmina Solidum Tirol, Interview with Elmina Solidum Tirol, Audio, June 9, 2015, Davao City.

172 Campos Yap, Interview with Felicitas Campos Yap.


176 Ibid., 51.


180 Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, Nov. 11, 1931,” November 11, 1931.


182 Ledesma, Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015.

Pat Frank, “Pat Frank to Gen, July 21, 1941,” July 21, 1941.

Rogelio L. Lizada, Song-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 153.

Ibid.


Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Her Aunt Wray, Grandmother, and Uncle Rogers, March 8, 1932,” March 8, 1932; Quirina Lapaza Fulgarinas, Interview with Quirina Lapaza Fulgarinas, May 21, 2015.

Walter Tong, “Rev. and Mrs. Claudio Fajardo” (Biography, 1947), Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library; Singer Sewing Machine Co., “Singer Installment Flier.”


Tong, “Rev. and Mrs. Claudio Fajardo.”


Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, June 17, 1934,” June 17, 1934.

Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, August 8, 1934,” August 8, 1934; Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother and Family, October 27, 1934,” October 27, 1934.

Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, November 30, 1940,” November 30, 1940; Sergio Intos Ondus, Interview with Sergio Intos Ondus, May 27, 2015.

Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, April 11, 1940,” April 11, 1940.

Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, August 1, 1934,” August 1, 1934.


Anonymous, Anita, Naty and Baby.


Sergio Intos Ondus, Interview with Sergio Intos Ondus, May 27, 2015.

Peter Burke, Cultural Hybridity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 93.
CHAPTER 8

SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN DAVAO’S CONTACT ZONES

1. Davao’s diversity by 1939

In the 1939 Census, Davao was one of only two Philippine provinces\(^1\) whose most spoken language was not of its indigenous peoples or of a neighboring ethnolinguistic group. Bisaya, the language of the main population centers in the Visayas, whether Cebuano or Hiligaynon, was spoken by 149,456 or 51% of Davao residents.\(^1\) The fact that only half of Davao’s inhabitants spoke the majority language, when other provinces registered the dominant vernacular at more than seventy percent, disclosed the characteristic ethnic diversity of Davao. Significantly, Davao had attained the widest range of linguistic variety in 25 languages and dialects, with more than two-fifths of the populace able to communicate in more than one language. Next to Bisaya, utilized by more than 15,000 of its inhabitants, were English (60,133), Tagalog (34,600), Mansaka and Mandaya (34,580), Bagobo and Guianga (18,655), Tagacaolo (18,282), Japanese (17,782), Bilaan (17,392), Manobo (16,466), and Spanish (15,636).\(^2\) The linguistic diversity indicated a remarkable mix of local and foreign language speakers throughout the area.

Further supporting this fact, Davao surpassed all other provinces\(^3\) in terms of the number of foreigners in its population, counting 21,775 individuals. A distant second was Rizal, the province that bordered the city of Manila, with 9,063 foreign nationals. Davao topped the list because of its 18,000-strong Japanese population, comprising 82% of total expatriates; other groups with significant numbers included the 3,600 Chinese, more than a hundred Americans, and an assorted handful of Spaniards, English and Indians. Numbering less than twenty for each country, were those from France, the Soviet Union, Germany, Holland, Arabia, Australia, Canada, the Dutch East Indies, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, and Poland.\(^3\) Consequently, Davao was the most diverse Mindanao province in terms of the provenance of its foreign inhabitants. While the

\(^1\) The other province whose majority language was not the mother tongue of its indigenous peoples was Zamboanga, with Bisaya spoken by 40 percent of its population.

\(^2\) Only the City of Manila’s 58,766 foreign inhabitants was higher, which included 46,233 Chinese, comprising almost 80% of the total foreign population in the city.
number of foreign settlers represented a significant portion of the Davao population, Filipinos migrating from different parts of the archipelago made up the majority, forming an ethnically heterogeneous social milieu for a fast-growing agricultural hub.

Table 8.1

Population of Davao Province by nationality, 1903, 1918, 1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1903</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65,496</td>
<td>108,222</td>
<td>292,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipinos*</td>
<td>65,423</td>
<td>102,221</td>
<td>270,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,920</td>
<td>17,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>3,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaniards</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*So-called “wild tribes” and “civilized” populations were conflated for the 1903 Census.

The panoply of Davao’s local and international population becomes even more apparent when tracing the province’s explosive growth rate after 1918. Based on 1939 Census data, Davao achieved the highest population increase among all provinces between 1918 and 1939, at 172 percent. Migration was primarily responsible for this rapid population growth, which paralleled the development of its abaca industry, creating a booming economy in the 1920s and 1930s. Since abaca, like a magnet, drew myriad peoples from different places to the region considered by early planter-settlers as a resource frontier, Davao became a dynamic contact zone where different nationalities and ethnic groups encountered one another in varying contexts and types of social interactions.

2. Cosmopolitan spaces: Barracks, convents, clubrooms, and sporting fields

It was three critical days in June that helped forge closer multinational cooperation in Davao during its formative years under American rule. From June 6 to 8, 1909, Davao was gripped with fear. Twenty-three Filipino constabulary mutinied against their Filipino and American commanding officers, attacked the town, and then escaped into the hills. At least five people were killed and scores wounded. The dead
included an American solider-turned-planter, a Japanese bystander, and three of the mutineers. A government investigation after the event pointed to poor Constabulary leadership coupled with ‘natural racial animosities’ as the principal causes for the rising, underscoring the harsh discipline inflicted upon the constabulary days before they mutinied. As a result of the official inquiry, three American officers were removed from service for their misguided conduct, and the mutineers imprisoned.

The incident, while considered an isolated case by officials in Manila and Zamboanga, and despite the racial undertones reported in newspapers, actually facilitated closer ties among Davao’s multi-national inhabitants. Each ethnic group played a part in defending the town and capturing the mutineers. Indigenous tribes helped furnish information on their movements and whereabouts in the hills. Several Filipinos acted as scouts, warning the town of imminent attack, while others, along with Spaniards and Americans, participated in patrolling the town and pursuing the mutineers. The Spanish Jesuit missionaries provided shelter to members of the American community in their convent during the attack, and afterwards, when some still did not feel safe to return to their homes. Spending time together in the convent under adverse conditions enabled respect and friendship to develop between the Spanish and Americans where once prejudice and suspicions reigned.

In addition, Spanish-Filipino Justice of the Peace, Prudencio Chicote, and a Japanese medic, Dr. Hashimoto, received widespread praise for lifting the community’s spirits during the siege and tending to the wounded. The spirit of multinational solidarity was even noted by Manila-based Cablenews-American, in its editorial:

“All settlers of whatever nationality in Davao have common interests and, as was demonstrated in the recent mutiny, when the entire settlement was threatened, it did not take long to forget all differences of opinion and petty controversy and get together to overcome a common enemy. These settlers will find many other enemies of progress in that section that will need the united effort of all the hands there to successfully overcome, and when they appear let us hope that the same spirit will prevail that characterized the defense of the colony a few weeks ago.”

The Constabulary incident showed that Davao inhabitants, while keeping mostly to themselves, had more reasons to unite them than divide them, when faced with extreme adversity. The colonial government, however, maintained a benign,
somewhat distant relationship with the people they governed there. At most, the local governor occasionally hosted balls where leading residents gathered together to socialize under an official gaze. One such event was held in 1913, on the eve of the crucial transition from military to civilian rule in Mindanao, when the American tourist Mary Ware witnessed Filipinas in “graceful” ternos dancing the rigodon, and Westerners dancing their waltzes. Mrs. Ware, however, did not mention the two peoples dancing together, perhaps because the guests were unfamiliar with each other’s dances, but the cultural unfamiliarity was symbolic of the American presence in Davao up to that point in time.

Mrs. Ware, however, explicitly mentioned the colonial government frowning upon relationships between American soldiers and local women. American individuals were expected to uphold the colonial image of the United States as exceptional benevolent administrators, but it was a perception and mandate that prevented closer personal encounters and formal ties with Filipinos. General John “Black Jack” Pershing kept tabs on American citizens in Mindanao, trying to ensure this expectation was maintained, especially in regard to the treatment of indigenous peoples. Americans with a bad record, “whose principles were lax,” were quietly told to leave the island, while those who stood “for the advancement of the country” and were willing to bear “part of the burden,” were praised as “government men.” The weight of such imposed expectations was a major obstacle to forming personal relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, which on the other hand, promoted among the Filipinos a stronger desire for modern material goods, as the objects and ideas they signified became proxies for personal contacts.

Even when intimate ties were limited to a person’s social circle, social encounters in Davao comprised many layers due to the diversity of its people, the remoteness of its location, and the singular nature of its agricultural economy. These factors alleviated, but did not entirely remove, communal and class barriers to an extent that made possible considerable personal interaction among indigenous and migrant Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Europeans, and other nationalities, including

---


D The relationship between Filipinos and imported goods are discussed in Chapter 7.
Americans. Organized social institutions and functions such as clubs, tournaments, schools, and carnivals helped facilitate such interactions, in addition to informal daily commercial relations in the streets and the planting fields. These personal encounters helped to generate a dynamic cosmopolitan mix among Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, and other migrants who socialized with one another beyond the colonial gaze, making cultural and economic boundaries more porous with the passage of time.

Fig. 8.1. Davao’s multicultural inhabitants socializing in the late 1930s. The old Davao east coast, the Visayas, Luzon, China and Syria were the direct and indirect places of origin of many in this photograph, with the possibility of some also hailing from Europe and the Americas. Courtesy of Vincent Garcia from the Nenita Azarcon Collection.  

Davao residents formed organizations loosely based on shared heritage and identity. The Americans, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese had their own clubs and associations, while Filipino migrants from particular provinces developed personal ties by helping one another settle on an emergent frontier, with common bonds strengthened by hometown associations and familial ties.  

The indigenous peoples, at the same time, had their own kinship and lineage ties. Descendants of early Filipino Christian settlers from Davao’s east coast started Hijos de Mindanao in the 1920s which later included Muslim members from Sulu.  

However, as the abaca-based economy grew and brought ever more Filipinos from various provinces to Davao, the
Hijos de Mindanao lost its exclusive character, as the subsequent generation established a more inclusive club that welcomed members from all over the Philippines and overseas. Americans and Europeans, due to their small numbers, colonial positions and personal circumstances, often socialized with one another, swimming, fishing and picnicking together on the seashore, aside from annual Christmas parties at the American Club.

Organizations based on occupation such as the American-led Davao Planter’s Association were invariably inclusive from their inception, with Spaniards and Lebanese as founding members. But by the 1930s, new more expansive organizations that combined civic-mindedness with purely commercial objectives, eclipsed the Davao Planter’s Association in social prominence. The Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce members now included Filipinos, Americans, Japanese and Chinese entrepreneurs, professionals, and government officials. A Rotarian described his club as a “cosmopolitan gathering, yet, no more friendly spirit could prevail,” where members gathered weekly “irrespective of creed, color or race,” and their wives attended monthly Ladies Night in fellowship.

The increasing multicultural and collaborative nature of civic organizations became instrumental in easing both national and international pressures. When anti-Japanese rumors were rife at the height of the ‘Davao Land Problem’ in 1935, the Chamber of Commerce hosted Japanese visitors and Filipino government investigators at a luncheon attended by American, Filipino and Japanese businessmen to clarify current issues. The camaraderie of the club members extended to sports, especially golf, and helped allay tensions over political problems beyond their control. Even as the clouds of a Pacific War loomed, Davao Rotary Club President, Sam Frank optimistically wrote in August 1941,

I would say that 95% of the Japanese here do not want to see trouble with the U.S.A. They not only have too much to lose... We get along fine with them and have done a lot of kidding back and forth during the present crisis, especially at the Golf Club where we see a lot of the leading Japs.

Sports helped undergird the social scene in Davao, fostering healthy competition and respect among the region’s diverse peoples. Aside from golf, other popular sports and games were tennis, billiards, hunting, boxing, cockfighting, and chess, providing
regular competitive interactions in sociable settings.\textsuperscript{24} In the 1930s, Filipinos and Japanese played tennis in Davao and Mintal, and with the Americans, held monthly golf tournaments. While at the billiard tables near City Hall, Visayan migrants often rubbed elbows with the mayor, Santiago Artiaga, who was from Manila.\textsuperscript{25} Among the young, the school meets annually held since the 1910s, especially in baseball and athletics, provided occasions for indigenous, migrant and foreign children from public and private schools to meet and have friendly competitions.\textsuperscript{26}

While formal social organizations and sports tournaments provided venues for multiracial interactions, neighborhoods were primary informal settings for facilitating cultural exchanges especially among youngsters. A shared Bolton Street backyard became the usual venue for Filipino and Japanese children to play with rubber bands together, despite communicating only through hand gestures and sounds.\textsuperscript{27} A shared-house arrangement on Legaspi Street gave a Jolo-born boy an opportunity to observe with fascination how a Japanese cooked \textit{dashi} broth using dried tuna.\textsuperscript{28} While in Santa Ana, children of Filipino migrants who took to wearing kimonos as bathrobes and eating \textit{manjo}, eagerly anticipated the routine time when their next-door Japanese neighbor fed his pet snake a live chicken for its meal.\textsuperscript{29}

Families living near the sea who regularly bought fish from the Japanese, also learned cultural lessons about another people and place.\textsuperscript{30} Despite not having gone outside of Malita, young Avelina Mahinay, a daughter of Visayan migrant laborers, knew the friendly fishermen were not Filipino because of their strange-looking footwear.\textsuperscript{31} It was a type of slipper she had not seen before, even among the Manobo, Tagacaolo or Muslims she occasionally encountered. Nearby, at the mouth of the Padada River, enterprising youngsters of American and Filipino ancestry, utilizing a mixture of Cebuano, Spanish and Japanese words, secured seafood from Japanese fishers as payment for ferrying them up-river to the market of Guihing.\textsuperscript{32}

Sadly, the amicable relationships that Davao’s multinational residents established with one another had lulled many inhabitants into a false sense of complacency on the eve of World War II. Many Filipinos and Americans did not evacuate Davao and opted to stay, confident that they would be spared from attack based on their business and social relationships with the Japanese residents of Davao.
They were proven very wrong when the Japanese military occupied the city after January 1942.\textsuperscript{33}

3. Schools as microcosm of the region

Schools, by their very essence, facilitated frequent social interactions with the nature of multicultural contacts largely dependent on the diversity of the students enrolled. To a certain extent, schools reflected how the various peoples of Davao interacted with one another in a manner that was primarily dictated by nationality groups. However, there were certain degrees of multinational interactions within and between schools. Schools designated for specific nationalities did not preclude students enrolling outside their “home” schools.\textsuperscript{34} The different types of schools in Davao included government-run public schools, parochial schools for Catholics and Protestants, and vernacular-based schools for Japanese and Chinese children. Most Filipino students went to the public or parochial schools. While the Japanese and Chinese studied in their own schools, with some also enrolling in public and private missionary schools as well.

Children learned to distinguish contemporaries based on what they wore to school. They encountered one another in the downtown morning rush hour that began with the sound of the 7 a.m. siren from the electric company, signaling the start of the day in 1930s Davao. Clean shaven Japanese schoolboys with red caps rushing past Chinese school girls in white blouses and green skirts were the early batch. They were followed by Catholic school boys, who wore white tops and khaki pants, and pink-skirted girls, jostling with public school students who wore the colorful combinations of non-uniformed students.\textsuperscript{35}

a. Public schools and parochial schools: Cooperation and competition

The 1930s morning bustle of city students was a far cry from the original situation of Davao education at the turn of the century when schools and teachers were lacking, and only the leading families could send their children to Manila to be formally educated. By default, American soldiers became the first teachers in the frontier town, instructing young and old in the English language in order to communicate with them.\textsuperscript{36} In 1900, the entire district had just one school in each of
the Spanish-era mission settlements: in the town of Davao, in Santa Cruz on the southwest coast, and Sigaboy on the east coast. The three one-classroom schools had a total of 234 students, while another 300 children could not attend school due to a lack of teachers and classrooms. Under these circumstances, the first American teacher assigned to the town the following year to teach boys felt overwhelmed when a hundred came to class on the first day.

The girls’ class was a more manageable under the charge of the first female teacher in Davao, Maud Jarman. In 1901, female enrollments had dropped from the previous year’s 64 as a result of opposition voiced to the new American schools by the recently-returned Spanish Jesuits. The Catholic missionaries, who returned in October 1900 after a twenty-month absence during the Revolutionary period, preached against the secular education of young girls. But the missionaries eventually relented to the American-style education after a meeting with the commanding officer, Capt. Hunter Liggett, as parents and children warmed to the new maestra when they learned that she was a cousin of a Davao planter’s wife, Mrs. Burchfield.

As a concession to Catholic mores, school instruction was held separately for girls and boys in the town. Since there were no grade levels yet, just primary instruction, classes were held in two-hour shifts at a one-room bodega which also functioned as a classroom. Boy’s classes started at 7 a.m., followed by the girls’ at 9 a.m., while afternoon sessions accommodated older students. In Santa Cruz, classes were co-ed by 1905, and divided for older and younger learners, at 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., respectively.

Facilities and school supplies were often inadequate in the early years. While it had benches, the dirt-floor bodega-classroom had no desks, no slates, no chalk, no blackboards, and not even a single primary reader. Laura Watson Benedict’s Santa Cruz classroom was no different, managing with no writing materials and no books for its 74 students for most of the 1906 school year. Teachers had to adapt to the austere situation, improvising whenever possible with available local materials. In Davao, Jarman fashioned teaching aids out of objects from the Army commissary.

---

Davao town had the highest enrollment with 70 boys and 64 girls, followed by Santa Cruz’s 35 boys and 25 girls, while Sigaboy had 18 boys and 22 girls in attendance. (Capt. Hunter Liggett, “Report of Captain Liggett to the Adjutant General, Department of Mindanao and Jolo, Zamboanga, P.I.” (Post of Davao, P.I.: U.S. Army, December 31, 1900), 3–4.)
Hence, wrapping paper substituted for a blackboard, a commissary paint brush functioned as chalk, and illustrations on imported tin cans became visual aids. By innovating in this manner, students learned how to spell from a can of pears without any idea what kind of fruit it was. Eventually, Jarman used fresh fruits growing around Davao, while Benedict used objects, such as seashells, found in the vicinity of coastal Santa Cruz to help them teach their students.

The use of local shells prompted students to share indigenous knowledge, as they named various types for their teacher. At the end of her year-long posting, Laura Benedict would conclude that her Bagobo pupils “taught as much as they have learned.” Jarman and Benedict’s students, in Davao town and Santa Cruz, were part of an estimated 700 primary school children in the District of Davao in 1902, whose numbers had already increased to 1,023 by 1906.

Due to a non-Catholic American maestra teaching female students and the Jesuits’ initial reaction and instigation against it, several families petitioned for establishing a parochial school for their daughters. The Beaterio de la Compania de Jesus, a religious order of nuns which already had several missions in Mindanao responded to the request and established their first school in Davao in 1905. The sisters opened St. Peter’s School for Girls under the leadership of Mother Clara Ramirez, a Filipino mestiza, who had previous administrative experience in the Zamboanga and Bulacan missions, to educate young women in reading and writing skills as well as catechism.

In marked contrast to religious instruction, government schools emphasized agricultural and industrial training by 1906. Based on the U.S. model of vocational education among African Americans, the government taught secular subjects in a growing number of schools in Davao town, Santa Cruz, Mati, Caraga, Cateel, and Baganga. Students learned Practical Arts such as hat and mat making, carpentry and needlework, geared towards their participation in the local economic development of their country. Public education taught young students the benefits of owning homesteads by using textbooks with arithmetic exercises depicting an independent farmer having more profit than a tenant. At the same time, teachers could emphasize

---

*The Beaterio was the forerunner of the present-day Religious of the Virgin Mary.*
the advantages of the Homestead Law, with assistance from the teaching magazines distributed by the government.\textsuperscript{52}

In the early years, when there was only three to four years of schooling, Davao students could double their education through a peculiar set of circumstances.\textsuperscript{53} In a contact zone where secular learning clashed with religious tradition, those parents valuing American education but aspiring to be faithful to their religion, negotiated between the two systems, having their children attend both schools. After Mass each morning, children went to the Catholic school beside the church for religious instruction for an hour. They then proceeded to the public school until half past eleven, primarily to learn English through songs and physical education. After lunch, the children returned to the parochial school for catechism class, before they went home. The public school method of incorporating music in teaching had a positive impact on the children, as they could be heard daily, singing American tunes while playing in the streets or inside their houses.\textsuperscript{54}

This distinctive bi-educational arrangement was put together by long-time Davao missionary, Fr. Mateo Gisbert, S.J. and the Moro Province Superintendent of Schools in 1904. But the educational experiment was beset by overlapping schedules that produced a lower-than-expected enrollment. The government eventually imposed fines on absent students, much to the chagrin of their parents, and raised concerns among the Jesuits who feared the punishment would discourage attendance in their school. Due to the tensions that arose within the community, double schooling was terminated by the missionaries and the government in 1907, and students from then on attended only one type of school full-time.\textsuperscript{55}

The intense competition that ensued between the government and the religious orders for the hearts and minds of the children after the partnership unraveled, created a strain on the state of education in Davao. The inadequacy of the public schools caused some parents to transfer their children to the Catholic schools when classes resumed in 1907. However, the missionaries had to turn down transferees due to lack of space and resources since they already had more than 100 girls and 60 boys enrolled, but only a few teachers. More importantly, they refused some transferees in
order to reduce tensions with the government, “pro bono pacis [for the sake of peace].”

Fig. 8.2. Students outside the San Pedro convent which functioned as the first parochial classroom, early 1900s. Courtesy of the University of Michigan.

Protestant missionaries also felt acute competition from the government when more public schools were established in the interior, after the shift to civilian government in 1913. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Protestant congregation assigned to Davao in 1902, had focused their educational activities on the outskirts of town, among the hill tribes unserved by Catholic missionaries. However, by 1915, the Protestant mission had relinquished two schools, stating “there is competition but also opportunity,” as the insular government opened new schools in places near their fields of operation.
Like the Jesuits, the Protestant missionaries’ primary task was evangelization and they undertook the task of formal education only as one among several means of proselytizing to communities. Thus, in times of constrained funding and limited personnel, Protestant school closures also occurred, only re-opening when circumstances improved. An exception to this trend was the Bagobo School at Melilla, the congregation’s largest educational institution, founded in 1912, which always remained in operation.

The competition among the different schools highlighted the work and problems of educating Davao’s children in a locality strained by the region’s rapid growth. By 1915, there were 3,837 students enrolled in 40 public schools in the Davao region, 1,210 were enrolled in Catholic schools, and 120 went to Protestant schools. Additional public educational institutions were established by 1918 attempting to keep pace with the abaca boom, which resulted to 42 primary schools, two intermediate schools, and 19 vocational schools with a total of 3,880 male and 2,033 female students across the province.

The insular government’s policy of Rapid Filipinization which involved more Filipinos in the administration of their own country, coupled with the expanding public school system, caused the employment of additional Filipino teachers, and reduction in the number of Americans. Hiring Filipinos was also economical, as a Filipino earned only a fifth of an American’s monthly salary.

Employment opportunity brought more Filipinos to Davao, who were assigned as educators to places in the interior entirely different from their hometowns, where they met students from dissimilar backgrounds. Their students, likewise, thought their teachers strange. One of the things a twenty-year-old Evaristo Ramos from Ilocos did, as part of his civilizing mission when he taught his first batch of Lumad students in 1918, was to instruct them how to dress ‘properly’ in trousers and shirts instead of their tribal garb. In another case, Mandaya pupils hid from their Batangueno teacher.

The Spanish and American Jesuits would give up their educational work at St. Peter’s School for Boys and transfer teaching duties to the French and Canadian PME Fathers in 1938. (“Silver Jubilee of the P.M.E. Fathers Souvenir Album, 1937-1962” (Foreign mission society of Quebec, Canada, 1962), Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus.)

The Davao Mission Hospital, established in 1908 and later renamed Brokenshire Memorial Hospital, was another means of drawing the people to the new faith, but it became indispensable to the health of the Davao community, and was given more support by the American Board of Commissioners than education.
Pio Mangilit, during the first days of class after hearing counter-point stories that Cristianos, stereotypically, devoured children.⁶³

Ramos and Mangilit belonged to the early batch of Filipino teachers who overcame a lack of educational qualification by their willingness to be assigned to teach on a remote frontier. By the 1920s, when the Bureau of Education started replacing such individuals with better-qualified teachers, many from their cohort decided to stay in Davao, applying for public land near their teaching posts, and went into farming.⁶⁴ That decade also saw the government-run Davao High School open (in 1922) with an all-Filipino staff of 3 teachers, a principal, and 67 enrollees.⁶⁵

Consequently, while some families still sent their children to private boarding schools in the Visayas and Luzon, many Davao residents were now enrolling their children in public schools, whose students grew from 7,286 pupils in 1920 to 9,082 in 1925, and further to 9,806 students in 1929. By 1937, the newly-chartered city counted 17 primary schools, three intermediate schools, and one high school attended by 4,402 students who came from all the different towns of the province.⁶⁶

Fig. 8.3. A Grade II class picture of Davao Elementary School, a government school, 1939-1940. Courtesy of Jose Madrazo.⁶⁷
b. Japanese schools: Countering assimilation through education

The substantial number of Japanese in the Davao region required the establishment of several Japanese schools supported by the local Japanese Association and their Consulate. In 1923, community leaders believed the presence of schools would encourage more Japanese families to settle in Davao. Transient male bachelor workers had comprised the majority of their population in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The leaders were less concerned as to whether the prospective school followed a Japanese curriculum, as long as it got built.\(^68\) The parents, however, insisted that schools should be formally accredited by the Japanese government so their children would face no difficulties enrolling in schools and colleges in Japan when they were old enough to be sent away from home.\(^69\) Furthermore, many Japanese were reluctant to send their children to public schools because “almost all are one-room schools under the charge of a single teacher and are aimed primarily at educating savage tribes.”\(^70\)

In effect, parents saw education as a means of maintaining their children as culturally Japanese, in the face of an increasing Filipino influence among their young. Interactions with Filipinos outside their homes led Japanese youngsters to display a “tendency toward total assimilation, understanding the local languages and customs of the various races in Davao [better than their own].”\(^71\) The children’s affinity for local Philippine tastes and lifestyle was most evident among Davao-born and bred Okinawans sent to Japan for further education. They had problems adapting to living in Japan, finding the food “miserable” and Japan “boring.”\(^72\) In like manner, a mainlander Japanese acknowledged his multi-cultural integration into “Japanese, American, Filipino and Chabacano culture” during happy childhood years in Davao.\(^73\)

Hoping to stem the assimilation of children into local Filipino culture, the curriculum in Davao schools strictly adhered to the Japanese model, and the community recruited licensed administrators and instructors from Japan under the auspices of the overseas accredited education system of the Japanese government.\(^74\) Students studied Japanese ethics and calligraphy as well as arithmetic and languages.\(^75\) However, because they were in the Philippines and subject to Philippine law, the Japanese schools made concessions to the Filipinization process. English was part of the curriculum and Filipinos were hired to teach this subject. Filipino teachers were
treated in the same manner as their Japanese counterparts and received good salaries commensurate with their period of service.\textsuperscript{76} Students learned about the Philippines in Geography class, while Philippine holidays and Davao festival days were also considered school holidays.\textsuperscript{77} On occasion, the schools even took adult learners of Philippine and Japanese nationality, educating Japanese professionals in English classes, while the Filipinos attended Japanese language classes.\textsuperscript{78}

![Image of students and faculty](image)

\textbf{Fig. 8.4.} Students of the Bayabas Japanese Primary school pose with the faculty, 1930s. Note the prominent display of the flags of the United States, the Philippines and Japan in the school building that used \textit{capiz} shells for window screens. Courtesy of Philippine-Japan Museum.\textsuperscript{79}

Following the two original Japanese schools teaching elementary through high school levels in Davao town and Mintal in 1923, more schools were built upon the arrival of migrants in later years. Seven schools had been added by 1935, increasing the overall number of Japanese schools to 13 in 1937, with 1,420 students, staffed by 48 Japanese and 9 Filipinos.\textsuperscript{80} Such was the central cultural importance of the schools in the Davao Japanese community that when the local branches of the Japanese Association reorganized in 1937, they based their groupings around the thirteen existing Japanese schools.\textsuperscript{81}
c. **The Chinese school: Sustaining children of another cultural heritage**

About the same time as the Japanese established their first schools in Davao town and Mintal, the Chinese community built a high school in June 1924 with the expressed aim of preserving Chinese language and culture among the overseas Chinese community. In contrast to the Japanese presence, Davao had the least number of Chinese among similarly populated provinces in the Philippines. The census identified only 19 Chinese in the entire province in 1903, comprising a mere 0.05% of the total Chinese population in the Philippines. Successive Census years, however, suggests a rapid rate of increase that overtook other provinces, increasing by 3,910 percent between 1903 and 1918, and 18,921 percent by 1939. The initial 1903 population of 19 had grown to 3,595 Chinese in Davao on the eve of the Second World War. Despite this remarkable rate of increase, the Chinese in Davao only comprised 3.06 % of the total Chinese population of the Philippines in 1939, and paled in comparison to Davao’s Japanese population of 17,888.

The increasing number of Chinese children though warranted the establishment of the Davao Chinese High School, which had 30 enrollees in its first year. Run by the Davao Central Educational Association, similar to the Philippine Chinese Educational Association in Manila, the school was supported by quarterly contributions from Association members and was locally called the Central School. Indicative of the cordial communal relations among the multi-national peoples of Davao, the school received land donated by a Hispanized Chinese, who was a former pearl merchant-turned-abaca planter in October 1924, the very same month that anti-Chinese riots were taking place in Manila. In Davao, Chinese students transferred to their new one-story wooden building the following January without incident, and began their studies under a Filipino-Chinese curriculum.

Davao’s Chinese school, like all Chinese schools in the Philippines, maintained a dual curriculum in compliance with national education laws. Its courses were similar to those offered in other Philippine schools, with additional subjects on Chinese language and culture. Students used English textbooks authorized by the colonial government’s Secretary of Public Instruction while Chinese workbooks were

---

1 The 1939 Chinese population in Zamboanga and Manila were still larger than Davao’s, at 4,167 and 46,233 respectively.
recommended by China’s Ministry of Education.\textsuperscript{89} Like the Japanese schools, Filipino instructors taught subjects using English as a medium of instruction, while Chinese teachers taught the Chinese courses.\textsuperscript{90} Just before the Second World War, the dual curriculum was taught to more than 300 students in a building with three classroom wings on campus grounds located between Davao’s Chinatown and the downtown area.\textsuperscript{91}

![Figure 8.5. A Grade VI class photo of the Davao Chinese School, 1937-1938. Courtesy of Jose Madrazo. \textsuperscript{92}]

\textbf{d. American homeschooling in the 1930s, from the perspective of three families}

The remoteness of Davao and the pioneering state of its educational institutions made homeschooling a practical alternative for some Americans living in the region. Families who took this option subscribed to the Calvert Correspondence Course of Baltimore. Educational materials in the form of mail-order instructions and workbooks were sent through the post. Children learned the Three R’s using this correspondence system until they reached third or fourth grade, when they were considered old enough to be sent to boarding schools outside Davao.\textsuperscript{93} Homeschooling was cheap and helped families save towards the future costs of expensive boarding schools.\textsuperscript{94} When they were considered of age, American children were sent to elementary and high schools in Manila or Baguio, while some went to Singapore, Hong Kong or Australia, then later to the United States for college.
In the 1930s, Frances Frank, her sister-in-law Genevive, and their missionary friend Margaret Tong organized a home-schooling co-op for the elementary children of the Davao American community. The women taught up to three hours in the afternoon, following a Philippine school schedule, so the children could still take advantage of the tropical summers. It was not easy for mothers as untrained teachers to mentor their children. Margaret Tong often felt discouraged when combining the role of mother and teacher simultaneously, apart from carrying out her other responsibilities as a preacher’s wife. Similarly, Frances Frank, despite the presence of househelp, always felt tired by evening following afternoon sessions with a friend’s daughter. She also stressed over a battle of wills with her son in other days. Pouring out her frustrations to her sister, she wrote:

I have started Sammy’s school work again and oh what a hopeless job it is. The only thing he is interested in is reading, and he has forgotten all his other work, spelling, numbers, etc. and how he hates to write stories!! The hardest thing of all is to keep my temper curbed when he starts talking as if he knew it all, and proceeds to tell me how it should be done. If he were right I wouldn’t care, but it is just hopeless for me to try to tell him something or explain something. He does need to go to a real school so badly or at least, he does need another teacher.

However, the Calvert system helped Sammy make a successful transition when he transferred to the United States in 1941. He was good enough to be admitted to Fourth Grade in a Missouri public school at only eight years of age.

The Tongs, unlike the Franks, utilized the Calvert system in conjunction with regular schools. Compared to the Franks who usually socialized with American and European businessmen, the Tongs mingled with a variety of people as missionaries, and, consequently, were more aware of the local conditions of the schools in Davao. By the late 1930s, they sent their youngest child, Annarae to a local kindergarten, and considered sending their other children to the public school which other American children also attended, although in the end they decided on the Brent School in Baguio.

e. The multi-lingual schoolyard as a contact zone

From its beginnings in 1905, the St. Peter’s School for Girls included English as part of its curriculum, and in subsequent years tried to attract more English teachers from Manila. In the school’s first year, however, when the English teacher had not
yet arrived, the students were accompanied by a nun to the class of an American teacher in the public school to learn English. St. Peter’s inclusion of English in the curriculum was a significant step to take for a Catholic school with close ties to the Jesuits, whose institutions in Manila were still reluctant to shift to the new lingua franca.

The cultural-linguistic move in Davao was due in large part to a substantial American presence in an area lacking formal institutions of learning during the Spanish period. In the Catholic schools in Davao, English was taught in order to retain students to counteract enrollments in the public schools, and maintain competitive classroom pedagogy with their rivals. Thus, in 1926, while their superiors in Manila continued to extoll the virtues of the Spanish language, Davao Jesuits, who included both Spanish and American missionaries by this time, believed just the opposite. Fr. Patrick Rafferty, S.J. candidly wrote to his superior that “Spanish is not as important as for Davao,” and noted several examples where English was spoken by the locals and other missionary orders in Davao and the Visayas.

A parallel development was the creation of schools catering to different ethno-linguistic groups, as people of the same ethnic group usually tended to socialize within their own local circles. Filipinos congregated according to regional identities as Cebuanos, Ilonggos or Cavitenos, etc. and the Japanese identified as mainlanders or Okinawans. While Americans and Europeans often moved in similar social circles bounded by Americans, British, and Spaniards, who also had their own national clubs.

Early public events, such as the 1907 Fourth of July celebration, acknowledged the varied ethnicities of its inhabitants, and thus had speeches delivered in Spanish, English, and Cebuano. Yet the constant nature of interactions in business and leisure activities among Davao’s peoples also led to the creation of a common creole patois which was a mixture of Spanish, English, Visayan, and Tagalog known as “abaca Spanish” or Chavacano, the Davao version. Moreover, there were exceptions to the grouping of nationalities into particular schools as some Japanese, Chinese, and mestizos attended government schools and Catholic schools.

In effect, while school administrators debated the language issue, children negotiated the boundaries of the multi-lingual divide naturally and without much issue.
in the schoolyards and playgrounds. Given the aptitude of the young to learn new vocabularies, children who spoke various languages at home conversed with their schoolmates in a multiplicity of tongues, employing English if all else failed. The classroom invariably became a contact zone, fostering a linguistic mix that spread to the larger contact zones of the region through varying degrees of interaction among its students, both inside and outside the classrooms.\textsuperscript{107}

The ability of children to speak multiple languages illustrated this phenomenon. Eight-year-old David Burchfield became a mediator and translator between Thomasite K Maud Jarman and her students in Davao town, due to his facility in the “Moro,” Visayan, and Manobo languages, as well as his native English.\textsuperscript{108} Sergio Ondus, a Bagobo, spoke Cebuano to Japanese classmates in his primary school at Tagakpakan in the Guianga hinterlands, where Filipino teachers delivered lectures in English and Filipino. At home, he conversed in Bagobo with his parents who had no prior schooling of the type they encouraged their son to attend.\textsuperscript{109} Felizardo Noblezada, a child of migrant workers from Iloilo, spoke Hiligaynon at home, English with his Filipino teachers in the classroom, and Cebuano among classmates when at play, in addition to learning Japanese and Bagobo phrases from friends at Tugbook Elementary School.\textsuperscript{110} Another schoolboy in Tugbok, who was a child of parents from Panay and Negros, often communicated with his Manobo bestfriend in Cebuano, and also occasionally in English, when Cebuano would not suffice.\textsuperscript{111}

A mix of languages also occurred at the St. Peter’s School for Boys. Aside from mastering English, the primary medium of instruction, students also had Spanish lessons, the lingua franca of parochial schools. Students with Ilonggo, Pampangan or Ilocano heritage often conversed in their vernacular with peers, but used English when communicating with French-Canadian missionary teachers in class, and, utilized Cebuano, English and Tagalog when chatting with classmates outside their linguistic group.\textsuperscript{112} Julian Rodriguez, born of parents from Davao and Luzon, spoke Dinabaw (a

\textsuperscript{1} This chapter focuses on the unofficial interactions among multi-national students in contact zone schoolrooms, but does acknowledge that exploring the effect of official pedagogical instructions on colonial students can be a matter for future studies.

\textsuperscript{K} Thomasite was a name given to American government teachers during the period of American rule. They took their name from the ship, the U.S.S. Thomas, which brought many of them to the Philippines. (Mary Racelis, ”Bearing Benevolence in the Classroom and Community,” in \textit{Bearers of Benevolence: The Thomasites and Public Education in the Philippines}, ed. Mary Racelis and Judy Celine Ick (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2001), 4.)
Mandaya-Cebuano language variant) with cousins in school, understood Hiligaynon and Cebuano from classmates, but found it difficult to comprehend Kapampangan and Ilocano. The multiple languages these students spoke did not hamper their future educational development. Sergio Ondus graduated with highest honors at his public elementary school, eventually acquiring a law degree after the Second World War, while Dinabaw-speaker Julian Rodriguez, earned a doctorate in Spain.

Even official school events reflected this frontier-cosmopolitan mix. A charity fair held by the St. Peter’s School for Girls in 1932 included a Davao Luzon Association, as well as Spaniards and Americans, among its organizers, patrons, and judges. The fair’s playbill, printed in English, showcased performance pieces from the United States, Spain, and Germany. The multicultural entertainment reflected its student population which consisted of a large Filipino majority but also included schoolchildren of Spanish, American, Middle Eastern, Japanese and Chinese ancestry. Class activities entailed reciting a piece entitled, “Little Japanese,” an English poem performed with kimonos, fans and parasols. Likewise, in the Protestant-run kindergarten across town, American Annarae Tong wore a Filipino dress as she performed a Philippine folk dance with classmates in 1940.

Such school activities reinforced Davao’s multi-cultural milieu, and reflected the region’s linguistic diversity, which was described in one contemporary account as the land where “twenty-five languages are heard on the streets.” Individuals growing up in the Davao region, out of necessity, conversed in different tongues, depending on who they encountered. For example, a Japanese high-school student, employed as a houseboy in a Spanish home, describe his multiple language use as such in 1941 Davao:

Doña Maria and Señorita Nena spoke to me in “Chavacano” which was spoken by everyone in Davao. I spoke English to the two girls [from the Immaculate Concepcion Institute] I was tutoring, and in Visayan to the two maids. Speaking Chavacano, English and Visayan was rather confusing but I did not complain. I liked learning other languages.

The poem goes: Little Japanese I am, I come from Japan/ Come here to greet you with my parasol and fan/ Bowing, bowing, I come from Japan… (Tessie Lizada, Interview with Tessie Lizada, September 29, 2015.)
Davao, being a mid-level American colonial city located in Asia, and populated by peoples of diverse cultures, developed a particular cosmopolitan blend by the 1930s, mediated in large measure through the languages they spoke, and set against the backdrop of an evolving resource frontier. Filipino settlers, coming from the Hispanized provinces of the north, brought cultural traditions and practices derived from previous Philippine east-west encounters as they interacted with fellow settlers from other diverse backgrounds in Davao.

4. Carnivals and fairs: Mingling the sacred and the profane

Ever since the Spanish-Basque conquistador Don Jose Oyanguren defeated the indigenous leader Datu Bago on the feast day of St. Peter the Apostle in 1848, Davao settlers have commemorated the 29th of June with a Mass in honor of the Saint who brought victory against Islam for the Christian settlement. Spanish-era Jesuits made the event an occasion for gathering at Davao’s mission house to celebrate the feast day, and sermons were prepared with extraordinary care for the occasion.120

Fig. 8.6. San Pedro Church with its two towers facing the town plaza, early 1900s. Courtesy of Vincent Garcia.121
At the start of the twentieth century, afternoon processions followed the morning’s Holy Mass, with devout followers carrying the statue of St. Peter through the streets of the town to cap a day’s celebrations held at the plaza in front of the church. By the early 1930s, baptisms, a singing contest, and children’s bicycle races formed part of the celebrations held at the plaza.\(^{122}\) Aside from the feast of St. Peter, town residents also held processions during the feast days of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart.\(^{123}\) Similar to other places in the Philippines, the outlying villages of Davao province celebrated their fiestas on the feast day of their respective patron saints.

As Davao town grew into a city, the religious San Pedro fiesta occurred alongside the secular government-backed carnivals held at the same time as the religious celebrations. In 1938, the newly-chartered city held a grand affair patterned after the Manila Carnival, to announce Davao’s coming of age on the national and international stage. However, the difference in the time of year of the two extravaganzas gave the Davao Carnival its unique character since it was held mid-year to coincide with the customary San Pedro fete, making the Carnival a singular extension of the town’s traditional religious fiesta.

By comparison, Manila carnivals occurred during the first quarter of the year as part of pre-Lenten festivities. Their schedule resulted from the first organizers, Americans working for the government and private sector, attempting to merge Manila’s Eurasian Catholic traditions with American-style entertainment. The carnivals were meant to generate goodwill among Asian neighbors, especially those from Japan and India, and, in the tradition of American world fairs, to also make money.\(^{124}\)

Thus conceived, carnivals were often considered sites for international appreciation and understanding. Carnival beauties bore titles representing foreign lands, while folk songs, cultural dances and thematic floats highlighted the mingling of local and foreign music, movement and costumes.\(^{125}\) In time, however, the feature of the carnivals that became most popular among Filipinos was the crowning of the carnival queen and her entourage, a tableau that closely resembled the court of
Empress Helena in the traditional Spanish-Filipino Santacruzan\(^M\) festivities, but later secularized to fit the tastes of the American Philippines.\(^{126}\)

The secularization of Philippine festivals was part of an ongoing process after 1902, signified through the creation of a new civic calendar by the Philippine Commission establishing non-religious holidays.\(^{127}\) Foremost among these official holidays was Rizal Day, held on December 30th, a date first set by the Malolos Republic in 1898 to commemorate Rizal’s martyrdom, and subsequently appropriated by William Howard Taft’s colonial government.

The date could not have been better situated for fiesta-loving Filipinos in Davao, as it meant local residents celebrated a major festival every six months, proper ritual book-ends to mark a year. More importantly, Rizal Day connected distant Davao to celebrations of a national hero for an archipelago now under American rule. Rizal Day’s local popularity was also bolstered by the fact that one of Davao’s leading personalities of the period, Teodoro Palma Gil, was a schoolmate of Rizal at Manila’s Ateneo Municipal.

Davao’s Rizal Day celebrations, like those conducted in other parts of the country, conveyed symbols and messages celebrating Philippine-American ties. The 1905 program created by local leaders and developed by the “youth of both sexes” included decorated floats of two transpacific martyrs of the time, namely, Rizal and McKinley, in a procession that “surpassed all hopes, attended by an infinity of persons who roved around the principal streets of the town.”\(^{128}\) Two decades later, images of Rizal, Lady Liberty, the flags of both countries, including details, such as American stars and stripes and Philippine sun rays continued to be reimagined in the motorcades and costumes of local participants (Fig. 8.7).\(^{129}\)

\(^{M}\) The Santacruzan is a May-time religious procession held in the Philippines since Spanish times. It is based on St. Helena’s search for the Holy Cross in the fourth century, and in the procession, she is joined by characters from the Bible, those representing the Catholic virtues, and the Emperor Constantine, who is her escort. (Teodora T. Battad et al., Various Religious Beliefs and Practices in the Philippines, vol. 1 (Quezon City: Rex Book Store, Inc, 2008), 18–19.)
Fig. 8.7. Rizal Day, 1925. Among the flags of the U.S. and Philippines is a bust of Rizal atop a pedestal draped with the stars and stripes. Courtesy of Vincent Garcia.  

Fig. 8.8. All lit up: Davao Carnival and Exposition Auditorium, 1938. Courtesy of www.manilacarnivals.blogspot.com.
In the 1930s, another symbol of American technology and modernity – electricity – had made its impact on public events. Electric lighting enabled the 1933 Rizal Day celebrations, which also included the Davao Fair and Exposition, to hold spectacles well into the night, as well as creating special effects. Programs for the two-week event included an *International Night*, a *Luzon Night*, and a *Mindanao Night*. In 1938, hundreds of light bulbs also made the *Davao Woman’s Club Night* a brightly-lit success, when ladies arrived at the wooden auditorium dressed in fine *ternos*, escorted by men in white dinner jackets and black ties.

Organizers of the 1941 Carnival rightly understood electric lighting to be a crucial component of success, as they appointed the manager of Davao Light & Power Co. as the event’s chairman. Barren lots along minor streets of the city were transformed into a magical wonderland due to brightly glowing bulbs and twinkling lanterns strung across the grounds, booths, and an auditorium (Fig. 8.8). Drawn by the hundred lights, a mother would bring her children to see the shows even if her husband did not normally approve of night outings.

Carnivals and fairs offered many out-of-the-ordinary experiences for the various folks of Davao who came from near and far to take part in the transitory merrymaking. Town employees took a break from their routines as they watched a parade of mounted Army officials leading soldiers to the beat of a military band pass their shop fronts, while a young hinterland resident hitched a ride on an abaca truck that doubled as a public conveyance to have his day at the downtown fairgrounds. Youngsters reared on fish and pork happily ate roast beef served on open sandwiches sprinkled with pickles which they could only find at carnivals. Typical of the nature of carnivals as make-believe spectacles, participants enjoyed dressing up as “the other,” whether Filipinos in Japanese kimonos, men in women’s wigs or ladies in male trousers.

The festivities brought many residents of the different towns together as they participated as fairgoers, performers, and organizers with the professional carnival operators from Manila. Thrill-seeking downtown youngsters had the time of their lives as they whizzed through the air riding the merry-go-round or the Ferris wheel. A Guianga doctor volunteered his talent for painting by creating a large carnival signage.
Business people from all over the province worked on the various committees and served as judges in the many contests. Assorted folks embraced foreign cultures as they watched a comparsa in the tradition of Hispanic carnivals wearing masks, or a Philippine folk dance performed by local schoolchildren of Philippine, American, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese parentage.

While the San Pedro fiesta and the Davao Carnival were the town’s main events, Davao residents celebrated other such occasions as well. They enjoyed palm-decorated parades and motorcades along the main streets to observe the restoration of the Philippine flag in 1919, and watched a 4th of July parade of flag-waving Filipinos, Japanese and Americans in 1937. Local beauty queens were social fixtures at these events. Through the years, queens were “dressed and crowned” at events such as the Independence Day celebrations of 1907, Garden Day in 1922, a 1927 Charity Fair, a Spanish Club affair in 1937, as well as a young lady crowned Miss Industrial in 1938. Even the Catholic school fair of 1932 had a “Lily of the Land of Promise” presiding over her youthful floral court.

These festivities and events created the context for a shared experience among Davao’s multicultural population through public participation. Moreover, they provided a neutral space for different cultures to interact with each other, especially during tense political times. An example of this occurred in the 1935 carnival, when a Japanese girl was chosen queen over a Filipina. The Japanese community, mindful of the bad press they were receiving in the national papers due to the ‘Davao Land Problem,’ sent representatives to the brother of the Filipino runner-up offering to reverse the decision. The Filipino however, politely refused their request, explaining that the Japanese girl was chosen under fair circumstances. The two parties emerged from the meeting upholding the original decision with a more reconciled acceptance of the verdict.

In fact, the anti-foreign rhetoric of the national press in the mid-1930s linked with the ‘Davao Land Problem’ only served as a counter-point that sharpened Davao’s identity as a multi-national entrepot, as its inhabitants became ever more conscious of their multicultural circumstances. After 1935, local politicians and businessmen stressed international cooperation in their writings and speeches as a means to
achieve the nationally-accepted ethos of progress and development. The carnivals served to help convey these messages of foreign cooperation, projecting the foreign in a positive light, with beauty queens garbed in exotic regalia, and programs that featured children of various nationalities performing together.

Furthermore, by dressing in costumes considered to be foreign, Davao residents literally tried on the clothing and cultures of others, and in the process created new fashions. Putting on the “other’s” clothes brought about cultural mixing and new directions as non-native wearers added their fashion sense to the various ensembles. In 1938, Carnival Queen Angela Bangoy wore a Muslim-inspired outfit, arrayed in pearls, and two intricately embroidered silk malongs, but with a Western tiara on her head. A similar occurrence transpired among the participants in the International Night of the 1941 Davao Carnival (Fig.8.9). Filipino, American, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese children donned variations of the barong Tagalog, Visayan kimona, and Maria Clara terno as they danced to a Philippine folk song wearing Western shoes, rather than the traditional way, wearing slippers or going barefoot. Through such a process of dressing-up, participants mixed and matched different styles, foreign and local, old and new, and helped give birth to a contemporary Davao fashion.

Fig. 8.9. Children representing the Philippines, Japan, China, Spain and the United States performed a Philippine folk dance in International Night, Davao Carnival, 1941. Courtesy of the American Historical Collection.

By undergoing the experience of a Philippine folk dance, hearing its music, moving one’s body to its unfamiliar tempo, and putting on Filipiniana clothing, the
multi-national children of Davao not only were crossing cultural boundaries between themselves and their audience, but also underwent a personal cultural lesson. In 1941, the extent of the social interactions the younger generation had with the foreign was already deeper than that of the previous generation, like those the tourist Mary Ware saw at the 1913 Governor’s ball when the two groups of people were dancing separately. Such social disjunction was no longer the case in Davao on the eve of the Second World War, as residents were accommodating and appropriating one another’s dances and cultures in ways meant to celebrate the region’s cosmopolitan roots.

5. Mixed marriages: The case of hybrid families

While carnivals were temporary community amusement events displaying the exotic, they nevertheless had lasting effects on the practices and memories of fairgoers and performers. Marriages, on the other hand, brought inter-cultural relations down to the level of the family and the everyday. In a region already containing a great variety of tribal groups, twentieth-century Davao experienced one of the country’s largest influx of migrants. Davao’s indigenous tribes, especially Bagobos, Manobos, and Mandayas, were noted for their general tolerance toward these outsiders, despite intermittent intertribal conflicts.\textsuperscript{149} Bagobo oral tradition accommodated nineteenth century Spaniards into their narratives, with stories highlighting the social acceptance of mestizos into their community.\textsuperscript{150} In 1883, Jesuit historian and missionary, Pastells, even noted Mandayas intermarrying with shipwrecked Europeans.\textsuperscript{151} This process of cultural incorporation was reflected by Spanish-era settlers who were descended from a mixture of Visayan and Mandaya converts to Catholicism along the Mindanao east coast.\textsuperscript{152}

The opening of the hinterlands to economic development meant that tribal peoples had numerous contacts with Filipino and foreign migrants whether through trading or working in plantation agriculture. These tribal-migrant encounters resulted in intermarriages as individuals met and interacted under varied circumstances in the interior. Between 1900 and 1920, aside from Bagobo-Japanese marriages, unions took place between tribal peoples and other migrants as well.\textsuperscript{153} Examples of these were marriages between a Bagobo woman and a Filipino Protestant pastor, a female
Bagobo and a hispanized Chinese, and a Mandaya woman with a Chinese trader, who adopted a Middle Eastern name upon baptism. Likewise, Kulamans inhabiting the west coast of the gulf, were known to marry Visayans, Spaniards and Americans in the period under study.

The 1939 Census attested to Davao’s ethnic mingling when it noted that that the province had one of the highest percentages of mixed-race inhabitants in the Philippines with 1,962 individuals registered as mestizo. Intermarriages between indigenous peoples and Filipino migrants occurred with increasing regularity so that a new mestizo culture could be seen emerging by the 1930s:

You must go a long way into the hinterland to see the remnants of those tribes. Everywhere you will find the hand of the conquering pioneers, carving out farms and homesteads, building roads wide and white, cutting down forests and bridging streams. You travel days and then come upon a disillusion: you see the original tribes, the Bagobos, Mandayas, Mansakas, Moros, living side by side with the ubiquitous Christians, intermarrying and bringing up offspring blissfully innocent of their savage inheritance. You seek to meet the original savage, dressed in strange habiliments, and come upon a cigar store Indian. You seek to verify the tale of Mandaya husbands taking it easy and idling away the hours while their wives sit in the field for their livelihood, and you find a Christian husband and a non-Christian wife sharing responsibilities side by side.

At the same time, intermarriages among Christian Filipino settlers was also becoming more common by the 1930s. A sample population of the baptismal records of the San Pedro parish, the only parish for Davao Province before 1948, supports this trend. San Pedro Baptismal entries, with surnames starting A and B between the years 1936 and 1941, show that 60% of the parents of the baptized were born in different provinces. At a time when there were 49 administrative provinces in the Philippines, the entries reveal that settlers from 7 out of 11 (64%) Philippine provinces, and China, married spouses outside of their place of birth (Table 8.2). Further evidence of mixed households can be found when looking at ethnolinguistic unions from the parish records. They show that among Philippine ethnolinguistic

---

N Davao’s mixed-race inhabitants comprised 0.7 percent of its total population, higher than the national average of 0.3 percent. Other provinces that had a 0.7 percent mestizo population were Rizal (3,007) and Zamboanga (2,398). The city of Manila had the largest number of mestizo residents at 7,517 comprising 1.2 percent of its total population. (Census of the Philippines 1939. Summary for the Philippines and General Report for the Census of Population and Agriculture, vol. II (Manila, P.I., 1939), 405.)

O Census data for 1939 lists 147,483 persons in Davao as Catholics, comprising half of the total population of the province. (Commission of the Census, Census of the Philippines: 1939 (Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1940), 13.)
groups, half of the settlers from Luzon and Visayas chose life partners outside their language cluster, presumably a fellow migrant they met in Davao. While not by all means comprehensive, the parish data, nevertheless, indicates that a large number of the populace of Davao brought the mingling of cultures and nationalities into their homes, raising hybrid children that personified and blended the distinct worlds of their parents.

Table 8.2
San Pedro Baptismal Records, 1936-1941
Entries from surnames starting with A & B
No. of Different Province Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent's Birth Provinces</th>
<th>No. of entries</th>
<th>No. of Different Province Unions</th>
<th>% Different Province Unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Abra</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Negros Occidental</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Iloilo</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 Zamboanga</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 China</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ilocos Norte</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Leyte</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Negros Oriental</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Bohol</td>
<td>1,422</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Davao</td>
<td>1,921</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Cebu</td>
<td>2,956</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to Filipino and Japanese marriages, the preponderance of Japanese male migrants in the first three decades of the twentieth century, resulted in sizeable numbers of Japanese marrying into Filipino ethnic groups, usually involving an indigenous woman and a Japanese farmer. Such marriages rose from 20 in 1911 to 200 by 1931. Even in the late 1930s, when more Japanese families arrived, and developed a more close-knit society, Filipino-Japanese pairings continued to occur. Davao had the largest number of intermarriages between Filipino women and Japanese men in the archipelago at 269 cases, producing 754 offspring of mixed Filipino and Japanese descent. Records from 12 Japanese schools in Davao reported 208 mestizo students whose parents were Japanese fathers and Visayan, Bagobo, Bilaan, Mansaka or Mandaya mothers. These intermarriages helped smooth over
While Filipino relationships between the three largest nationality groups, namely their compatriots, the Japanese and the Chinese, were free of government censure, the colonial administration tended to discourage similar ties between Filipinos and Americans, the fourth largest group in Davao. Much like in the United States, American soldiers who had liaisons with Filipino women were called “squaw men” and were “not regarded favorably by the government.” Disregarding this informal directive often meant forgoing promotion in the U.S. Army and colonial government. Notwithstanding such social expectations, there were still cases of Philippine-American intermarriages, official and unofficial, in Davao.

![Fig. 8.10. An American, Frank Fox, with wife, mother-in-law and five children, Davao East Coast, 1924. Courtesy of the Carl E. Guthe Collection.](image)

Of the 46 “white” men whom General Pershing kept a dossier on, twenty of them, or 44% of the list, had recorded unions with women of Filipino, mestizo, Bagobo, Manobo and Tagacaolo heritage. Many more Davao-based American and European men, outside of Pershing’s list, married or cohabited with indigenous,
Visayan, and mixed-race women described in government forms as “Mora from Sulu,” “Filipina mestiza,” or “American mestiza.” Almost all these unions produced mixed-race children who continued to live in Davao even after their American fathers died. Government disapproval could have skewed the 1939 Census when it listed only 17 official matrimonyes between Filipino wives and American men producing 49 offspring, with some unwilling to report their marriages officially. There were certainly more unofficial unions that occurred, such as the cases of the Gilbert and Bradley families on the east coast of the Gulf whose American fathers died before legitimizing their marriages or the birth of their progeny.

All things considered, personal relationships, friendships, and marriages produced an amalgamation of cultures, as much as the experience of internalizing foreign dances at carnivals or reciting declamation pieces in school. Like the persons who wore exotic clothes at the temporary fairs they reigned over as pageant queens, or as Lady Liberty atop a motorcade, the children of Davao’s multicultural inhabitants helped merge ethnically diverse backgrounds with schoolroom experiences and streetside observations. Even though their time as carnival queen or Uncle Sam on floats only lasted for a brief moment, day to day interactions with other Davao inhabitants on the street, in school and in civic organizations, had a lasting influence similar to the cultural impact that intermarriages produced. If not in the genes, then in people’s mindsets and practices, cultures were being transformed by inhabitants across the contact zones of Davao. Time spent chatting and playing with classmates of different backgrounds, hearing stories from parents of different ethnicities, taking part in old traditions or fashioning new rituals, meeting at socials and fairs, or routine encounters at a multicultural home, helped ingrain aspects of the global in the minds and lifeways of the local people who came to identify themselves as Dabawenyos.

---

9 Data is based on the information provided in Pershing’s dossier and the death notices found in the Personal Name Information Files of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Records Group 350, United States National Archives and Records Administration.
2 Ibid., II:369–73.
3 Ibid., II:428–32.
4 Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1904), 284; Census Office, Census of the Philippine Islands 1918 (Manila: Philippine Islands, 1921), 99–100, 352, 901; Census of the Philippines 1939. Summary for the Philippines and General Report for the Census of Population and Agriculture, II:428–32.
11 Special Correspondence, “Davao Natives Help the Mutineers Attack Convent,” 3.
13 Mary S. Ware, The Old World Through Old Eyes: Three Years in Oriental Lands (New York; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), 126.
14 Ibid., 124.
16 Cupid Studio, Davao Group Photo, Photograph, Pre-war, Private Collection of Nenita Azarcon.
17 Monina Suarez Magallanes, Sang Uma… (Once upon a Time) (Davao City, Philippines: Monina Suarez Magallanes, 2011), 151–65; Rogelio L. Lizada, Sang-Awun Sa Dabaw (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 135–36; Evelyn Burchfield, “Twenty-Five Years with the Filipinos” n.d., 41, Manuscript & Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky Special Collections Library.
19 Ibid., 3.
20 Burchfield, “Twenty-Five Years with the Filipinos,” 40–41.
23 Samuel B. Frank, “Sam Frank to Fran, August 23, 1941,” August 23, 1941.
27 Leticia Pichon Militante, Interview with Mrs. Leticia Pichon Militante, Audio, June 18, 2015.
28 Jorge Ledesma, Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015, June 7, 2015.
29 Lucy Ebro Pelayo, Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.
30 Mamerto Barlisa Daclan, Interview with Mamerto Barlisa Daclan, Audio, June 10, 2015.
31 Avelina V. Mahinay, Interview with Avelina V. Mahinay, June 15, 2015.
32 Lucy Christensen, Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.
329

35 Lizada, *Song-Awun Sa Dabaw*, 163–64.
36 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 142.
39 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 117.
44 Lardizabal, “Pioneer American Teachers and Philippine Education,” 117. 130.
45 Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, December 20, 1906.”
47 Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, April 7, 1907,” April 7, 1907.
48 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 143, 145.
53 Laura Watson Benedict, “Benedict to Dorsey, November 9, 1907,” November 9, 1907, 7–8; Rogelio L. Lizada, *Song-Awun Sa Dabaw* (Davao City, Philippines: Rogelio L. Lizada, 2002), 115.
54 Antonio S.J. Gairolas, “Gairolas to Father Superior, September 1, 1904,” September 1, 1904, Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus.
60 Ernesto Corcino, *Davao History* (Davao City, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Movement Davao City Chapter, 1998), 144–45.
61 Ibid., 156.


Davao Chong Hua High School, “History.”


Ibid., 164.

Corcino, *Davao History*, 147.

Davao Chong Hua High School, “History.”


Samuel B. Frank, Samuel B. Frank Interviews, interview by Russel Frank, January 28, 1990, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University; Evelyn Burchfield, “Twenty-Five Years with the Filipinos” n.d., 41, Manuscript & Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky Special Collections Library.

Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, Feb. 11, 1941,” February 11, 1941.

Frank, Samuel B. Frank Interviews.

Frances Frank, “Fran to Her Sister and Roger, Jan. 9, 1940,” January 9, 1940; Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Mother, August 30, 1940,” August 30, 1940.

Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Jack, Johnnie and Anne, Sept. 2, 1941,” September 2, 1941.


Frances Frank, “Fran Frank to Her Sister, Roger and Randy, October 16, 1939,” October 16, 1939.

Walter Tong, “Walter Tong to Mother and All, Nov. 2, 1940,” November 2, 1940.


104 Patrick Rafferty S.J., “P. Rafferty to the Father Provincial, April 27, 1926,” April 27, 1926.


109 Sergio Intos Ondus, Interview with Sergio Intos Ondus, May 27, 2015.

110 Felizardo Nobleza, Interview with Felizardo Nobleza, Audio, May 27, 2015.

111 Roberto L. Dakudao, Interview with Roberto L. Dakudao, May 7, 2015, Davao City.

112 Julian Rodriguez Jr., Interview with Julian Rodriguez, Jr., June 8, 2015, June 8, 2015.

113 Ibid.


116 Lizada, Interview with Tessie Lizada.

117 Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Her Mother, October 17, 1940,” October 17, 1940.

118 Frank C. Laubach, “Mindanao, Island of Romance” (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1928), 5; Walter and Margaret Tong Papers, Yale University Divinity School Library.


121 Unknown, *San Pedro Church and Plaza*, Photograph, 1900s, Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.


125 Philippine Carnival Association, “The Philippines Carnival: Manila, February 2-8, 1908.”

126 Philippine Carnival Association, “The Philippines Carnival: Manila, February 2-8, 1908” (Bureau of Printing, 1908), 5453 Carnivals and Expos, 1898-1914, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


130 Ibid.


132 Frances Frank, “Frances Frank to Her Mother in the U.S., December 27, 1933,” December 27, 1933; Margaret Tong, “Margaret Tong to Her Mother, December 31, 1933,” December 31, 1933.
158 Ibid., 2–6.
159 Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Murdoch University, 1984), 220, 222.
162 Ibid.
164 Carl E. Guthe, Frank Fox and Family, Photograph, 1924, Carl Eugen Guthe Collections, Bentley Historical Library.
165 Commission of the Census, Census of the Philippines: 1939, 466.
EPILOGUE & CONCLUSION

ABACA IS DEAD, LONG LIVE DAVAO

During the forty-year period under study, Davao’s developmental history from a remote resource frontier to a regional economic center provided the impetus for the Davao region’s further progress after World War Two. Davao survived the post-war repatriation of the two nationalities that had significantly contributed to the growth of its pre-war abaca industry. The Japanese settlers were sent back to Japan because of their nation’s military defeat in 1945, and a year later, the American settlers left the islands due to scheduled Philippine independence. The Davao region would even endure the subsequent collapse of the abaca industry in the 1950s, the very economy that drove its pre-war development.

Despite these losses, Davao’s continued economic momentum was already unstoppable because the city and its province had developed on a sustainable basis by the eve of the Second World War, with the post-war period harnessing the energy and resources generated from the pre-war years. While migration after the war was primarily internal, the new migrants, like earlier Filipino settlers before them, looked upon Davao as a land of promise, and continued the work of economic development interrupted by the war and repatriations. The legacy of the robust foundation built in the first four decades of the twentieth century, driven by the complex encounters between the local and the foreign, served to further propel the region’s future growth.

That historical foundation of contact and development is what this thesis has explored. It begins at the initial stage of Davao’s growth at the turn of the century, when the idea of progress intersected with the history of abaca, a tropical plant, which attracted a diverse population to cultivate it. Migrants from various backgrounds settled an emergent Philippine frontier, and in the process, produced distinctive labor arrangements, production methods and marketing mechanisms adapted to the particularities of the abaca industry and the environment. Similarly, cultural attitudes, behaviors, and practices underwent a process of transformation too.

The notion of progress and development, first espoused by nineteenth-century Spanish missionaries among its Mindanao flock, received a new impetus and
interpretation from the occupation forces of the United States Army arriving at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{A} Carrying the “westward movement” of their country further, across the Pacific, the Americans considered Mindanao, and Davao in particular, their new western frontier. Davao thus entered their West of the imagination as a garden of the gods, an Eden waiting for man’s labor to develop its economic promise. Discharged soldiers from the American South and West founded their abaca plantations in Davao with the saga of their trans-Mississippi western pioneers in mind. Moreover, the Davao frontier’s natural environment and its indigenous inhabitants, compelled a handful of individuals, for personal and institutional reasons, to both study and explore the natural and ethnographic character of the region, making contact with equally-curious local peoples living in their traditional homelands that were in a process of transition and transformation.

The primary driver of that change was abaca. The export commodity provided the economic incentive for the abstract ideas of progress and development to become a tangible reality in Davao. Abaca, also called Manila hemp, had already been a Philippine export crop a century before Davao emerged on the scene. The country’s natural monopoly of the cash-crop accounted for the prosperity of Bicol in Southeastern Luzon, and the Visayan islands of Leyte, Samar, and Cebu as producers and distributors in the Spanish Philippines. In the same way that international trade linkage was a crucial aspect of the latter half of the Philippine’s nineteenth century economy, so it was for Davao in the first half of the twentieth century.

By linking metropolitan consumers to a remote frontier, the fiber transformed the Davao landscape, from an untamed wilderness into a thriving agricultural region. Plantation-scale infrastructure was crucial to the development of the young province. The network of roads opened up the hinterlands, and connected the interior to the coasts stimulating widespread and diverse cultural exchanges. Ports, wireless telegraph and telephones connected Davao’s mechanized frontier to the global commodity chain as never before. However, the overseas linkages also subjected Davao and its people to the volatility of distant world markets. To counteract global economic shocks, Davao producers depended on experimentation and innovation,

\textsuperscript{A} Under the Moro Province, Army men directly ruled the region from 1899 to 1913, then after civilian rule from 1914 to 1920, indirectly through former Moro Province Governor and retired Army Chief of Staff Leonard Wood who was Governor General of the Philippines from 1921 to 1927.
combining twentieth-century science and technology with tried-and-tested traditional practices to fine-tune aspects of the technology of the abaca industry.

Abaca grown in plots and plantations facilitated numerous encounters between foreigners on both sides of the frontier divide. Indigenous and migrant Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Americans, Europeans who all cultivated abaca in Davao invariably dealt with other peoples involved in its production, transportation, marketing and consumption in the Philippines, United States, Britain, Europe and Japan. Davao abaca caused a major Filipino internal migration to Mindanao, and the largest Japanese migration in Southeast Asia in the period under study. These two major groups, along with Chinese, Americans, Lebanese, Australians, Spanish and other Europeans and Asians, formed an emergent multicultural frontier community that interacted with the indigenous tribal peoples in the region. Working together, and sometimes in competition with each other, they produced new labor arrangements that combined the traditional commodity-based systems of reciprocity and exchange of semi-nomadic peoples with a modern monetized economy. The flexibility of these labor arrangements stemmed from the realities of a frontier that lacked a large surplus population pitted against the tropical backdrop of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of virgin land. Eventually, the labor arrangement that was most practiced, though by no means standardized, was the *pakyaw*.

A result of frontier conditions, the *pakyaw*, adapted the traditional communal practice of wholesale labor service to the singular conditions of Davao’s frontier. It was a customary work agreement between landholders and laborers that revolved around the harvest – a practice common in tenancy arrangements among rice-growing societies on Luzon, and in sharecropping contracts in other parts of the world. However, the traditional Philippine arrangement was stood on its head in Davao, with the worker receiving the larger share of the harvest.

Another offshoot of this encounter between the local and the foreign involving abaca was the *hagotan*, a stripping machine unique to the industry. American, Japanese and Filipino inventors and tinkerers participated in the race to create the ideal machine, but there was no single winner. The outcome was several similar devices, utilizing conventional mechanical know-how, manufactured in local machine
shops and widely used by abaca strippers in the region. The name of the machine, *hagotan*, was generic, meaning a portable and inexpensive machine capable of stripping fair quality abaca in moderate volume. The machine incorporated long-established abaca stripping techniques from the northern Philippine provinces with modern mechanical technology, yet was not a large complex mechanical device. Tens of thousands of abaca workers favored the *hagotan* over conventional labor-intensive manual stripping methods and it was also preferred against expensive imported models. The *hagotan* perfectly suited Davao frontier conditions because it provided a practical middle ground between cutting-edge science and pragmatic frontier ingenuity.

Marketing, likewise, underwent a practical change through the introduction of an auction system that made the buying and selling of abaca more convenient and reasonable to the parties involved. A service-oriented system, the abaca auction linked Davao producers directly to abaca buyers in New York, London and Tokyo through a quick and transparent bidding process. International buyers could examine abaca lots they bid for in central warehouses in Davao, and transacted payment with the local growers in a matter of minutes. From Davao’s auction houses, the abaca made its transoceanic voyages to the manufacturers that determined the world market prices of the fiber, namely the cordage factories of the United States, Britain, and Japan.

Davao’s twentieth-century frontier environment and outlook produced a cost-efficient high-quality fiber that dominated volatile global markets during the interwar years. Davao abaca took advantage of high demand and good prices by 1922, when the market improved after the post-World War I economic tumble, and Manila’s belated attempt at market manipulation failed. A decade later, Davao had cemented its place as the premier source of abaca as nations came out of the Great Depression. Instrumental to Davao’s success in the world market were the various innovations and adaptations of old and new practices, and local and foreign technologies, developed on the Davao frontier as signified by the homegrown *pakyaw, hagotan* and auction system.

As a result, the prosperity abaca brought to the diverse peoples of the region, affected the nature of consumption practices and social interactions, particularly
intensifying the mingling and interaction of the local and the foreign. The auction houses brought the world to Davao, but abaca transactions alone were not the sole basis of these new international relationships. In Davao, local abaca growers undertook journeys akin to their crop, if not physically, then through the world of ideas and changes in their material circumstance.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, government-sponsored exchanges, indigenous local markets and the American trading posts provided commodities such as salt, dried fish, cotton, canned goods (especially seafood), beads and shells to their tribal customers. Plantation stores played a larger role in the next decade, providing necessities to hill tribes as the agricultural frontier expanded. Plantation stores also catered to a large Christian Filipino population as abaca lured migrants to a region that was fast becoming interconnected with the outside world through modern transportation and communication technologies. Global linkages brought increased competition, as plantation stores contended with other types of retail outlets, from stand-alone tiendas, to chain stores, and mail-order and refrigerated merchandising by the third decade.

As Davao workers became discerning modern consumers, basic necessities were no longer the only articles purchased, as additional desired objects now also functioned as signs of taste and modern culture. Canned goods, magazines, and phonographs, along with more practical devices such as radios and sewing machines, signified the modern and reaffirmed the idea of progress and development espoused by American colonial administrators. Local consumers also imposed their own tastes and preferences by their manner of use of these imported goods. Phonographs played Cebuano folk songs, while children’s names inspired by Western songs and movies gained Filipino inflections. Imported goods such as milk or sewing machines were adjusted to the multinational needs and practices of Davao. From sensory experiences of taste, sight, sound, and touch, Davao’s diverse population adopted aspects of foreign cultures and created new styles of fashion, cuisine and speech. They melded the local and foreign into something distinctly Davao, that echoed the historical adaptations made by Filipinos through the centuries in the process of creating a broader Philippine culture.
Social contacts complemented and enhanced these material exchanges as Davao’s diverse peoples met and interacted with one another in various contact zones across the region. Inhabitants met and converged at social gatherings, schools, carnivals, and cohabited with one another. What resulted was a cultural hybridity that was quite significant. On this frontier, where cultures, commodities, and ideas mingled, different levels of interactions between the foreign and local had become so commonplace that it was taken for granted.

However, increasing pressure from the outside, due to the “Davao Land Problem” issue generated by the Manila press and politicians in the 1930s, forced Davao residents to confront their developing relationship with the ‘foreign.’ Scarred by the vehemence of an anti-foreign, especially anti-Japanese, rhetoric that threatened the very economic and social foundations upon which Davao’s abaca industry rested, the city’s leading inhabitants started promoting direct foreign cooperation via publications, Rotary Club speeches, and public events like the annual Davao Carnival. While the ethos of progress and development remained the accepted ideology and narrative for Davao, international cooperation became a central theme and goal after the region gained a city by 1937.

Multinational collaboration, overlooked in the past by its own actors because of its seeming ordinariness, became a crucial factor in fashioning an identity for a region whose wealth depended upon a commodity with transnational ties. The daily experience of learning different languages spoken on the streets and in schoolyards gained official support from the local school system and related organized events that promoted multinational cooperation. It was additionally symbolic that electricity, a modern technology from the West embraced by the local community, highlighted the multicultural camaraderie of participants at Davao fairs and carnivals.

Thus, on the eve of the Second World War, the population of Davao who prospered in an environment that rewarded hard work due to a booming abaca economy, looked to the future with hope based on friendly international relations. Even the prospect of war with Japan seemed initially remote to them and, for many, the halcyon sense of multicultural peoples living together in peace lulled them into a false sense of complacency that the war shattered.
Nonetheless, the memories of a multicultural Davao persisted, handed down by the people who lived there during the first four decades of the twentieth century. It was signified by the sense of estrangement of an American settler, returning to the United States due to the war and Philippine Independence who found her U.S. homeland “a strange country to us, in spite of it being the land of our birth.”

Memories of Davao lingered in the appeal of a repatriated Japanese migrant who, in old age, returned to Davao and wrote fondly of his multicultural childhood, calling for world peace. And, such memories of Davao have been particularly vivid among Filipinos, ‘oldtimers’ and post-war arrivals, whose evocation of the past sustained them as pioneers anew, engaged once again in confronting the challenge of progress and development in the rehabilitation of post-war Davao. Inspired by Davao’s growth from a frontier “backwater” to a major agricultural and commercial center in the southern Philippines in the first half of the twentieth century, they would now work in the second half of that century to rebuild Davao, again.

4 Evelyn Burchfield, “Twenty-Five Years with the Filipinos” n.d., 190, Manuscript & Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky Special Collections Library.
APPENDIX A

DAVAO NATIVES HELP THE MUTINEERS ATTACK CONVENT

Signals Are Given from Nearby Houses to Direct Fire of Outlaws and Information of Movements of Americans Carried; Story by One Who Fought.

(Special Correspondence.)

Davao, June 16 – At 10:30 p.m. of the 6th inst. the company of Constabulary stationed in Davao took their arms and about 7000 rounds of ammunition and went to the hills southwest of the town.

Lieut. Golcouria was making his inspections for the night and found five soldiers in the company kitchen counting out ammunition. When he made his presence known they fired upon him, inflicting three flesh wounds. He escaped to the house of a Filipino a short distance away and sent a boy after Lieut. De Balaine, the company commander. In the meantime the conspirators fired several volleys, collected the forces and left the barracks. Twenty-four men in all went out, the remainder fleeing to the river back of the quarters.

The citizens thought some prisoners were escaping and paid no particular attention to the shooting. It was learned that it was the intention of the men to kill their officers and go to the mountains. About half of the force went down Calle Magallanes toward the ford of the river, but made no attempt to molest the Americans. Capt. Burchfield, P.C. Libby, and Mr. Templeton were on Burchfield’s porch when they passed but did not have any opportunity to question them. Dr. Sibley was at his window and when he spoke to them he was told to get back and put out his light.

Answer With Volley.

In the meantime Governor Walker, armed with a revolver, had started out to investigate. When he saw the troops had left the barracks he went to the house of Lieut. De Balaine, who had been at home sick for some little time, and called him out before the boy Golcouria had sent appeared. The Governor and the lieutenant met the second half of the forces in Calle San Pedro in front of the office of Fernandez Hermanos, evidently on their way to their commander’s house. The insurrectos answered the Lieutenant’s command to drop their arms with a volley. They chased the two as far as Capt. Platka’s house and then returned to join their comrades in their escape. The two officers fled through the swamps to Sta. Ana where they took Mr. Birnbaum, Mr. Hale, and three natives and got on the Governor’s launch, the Fury.

Mr. McFie, the Secretary, had soon learned the true state of affairs and notified the Americans to collect in the house of the Manila Trading and Supply Co. with all their guns.

By 12 o’clock the soldiers had crossed the river and headed for Taloma. Not knowing the Governor’s whereabouts, it was believed that he and De Balaine had been killed, and search was made. The town was soon gone over very carefully, and at 12:30 the Americans were at the ford where the troops had crossed, having found no trace of the missing officers.

Americans Arm.

There were ten rifles and about 4000 rounds of ammunition left in the barracks with which the Americans immediately armed themselves. At two o’clock it was decided to try and head the foe off either at Daleao or Astorga, but when the launch was sent for it and no trace could be found as to where it had gone.
The launch Asencion was sent to Mati to get Lieut. Tarbell and his company of Constabulary for relief. About 2:00 a.m. the deserters had reached Taloma where they robbed the tiendas and murdered one Japanese with a bayonet. They then went down the coast and struck for the hills a short distance north of Daleao.

All day Monday nothing was done, as it was believed that the insurgents would not return, but Monday night the white people collected at the M.T. and S. house and in conjunction with some Spaniards and Filipinos patrolled the town till morning. Then Capt. Burchfield’s little caraga was sent down to Sta. Cruz to get Mr. Gohn and notify the various planters.

About 11:00 a.m. Tuesday the Governor returned. He thought that every American had been killed and went to Mr. Crowhurst’s place on the east side of the Gulf where there were four constabulary soldiers stationed to protect the plantation from the hill tribes, who had been ugly. He took their arms and ammunition, thinking they were in the conspiracy, and then went to Piso and instructed Mr. Harding to send runners over the Cusbo trail to Mati after Lieut. Tarbell, but the messengers reached the place after Tarbell and left on the “Asencion.” On the way to Piso the Fury had picked up Messrs. Schoppe, Mays, and Reynolds.

From Piso it struck across the Gulf to Sta. Cruz but Mr. Gohn was on his way to Davao. The Governor then started towards Davao, and at Tugalaya was hailed by Mr. Hanson and Mr. Welborn, who had received the word from Gohn and were that far on their way. At Daleao the party learned that no one had been injured but Golcouria and came on into town. Before the Fury arrived Mr. Gohn appeared and was sent down the coast to collect the planters.

Alarm Given.

Word came in through natives that the insurrectos were to attack the town between four and five that afternoon (Tuesday). Mr. Mays and a sergeant who had been faithful were stationed in the cemetery north of town. Mr. Hanson went out on a horse and seeing two or three heads in the distance returned to town post haste with the alarm. A skirmish line was formed by the Americans and advanced as far as the river ford where the troops had crossed. When no enemy was seen all returned to town except Mr. Mays, the sergeant, Capt. Burchfield, the Libby brothers, Mr. Templeton, and a sergeant of police, all armed with Krags taken from the soldiers who had not left with the others. All the ladies but Mrs. Sibley, who was with her husband in the M.T. and S. house, were taken to the Convent.

Mr. Mays was the first to see the enemy approaching and opened fire upon them. Seeing they were on horses, he fled for his life, his retreat being covered by the fire of those at the ford who did not know all the others had returned to town. The enemy had stolen horses for all hands and had crossed the river above the regular ford, thereby surprising the Americans from the rear.

Roy Libby Killed.

Before many shots had been exchanged Roy Libby was hit in the belt on the left side. He called out to the others, “They have got me, but I still have my gun.” These were his last words for he never answered the repeated calls from the others and the enemy was too close to attempt to get the body. He died almost instantly, clutching his rifle tightly, in his hands.

When the firing began the soldiers tumbled from their horses and fired from cover. Twice was the advance checked, but by rushes in extended order they were soon within a few yards of the Americans, who were firing from behind cocoanut trees. The three remaining defenders then fell back from tree to tree, firing till they reached the Municipio in the center of the town, where the other Americans had formed a skirmish line in the ditch facing the foe.

The insurgents entered the school house and one or two residences, and their advances were nobly repulsed as long as there was light. Dr. and Mrs. Sibley and infant daughter had run to the convent under cover of the fire, and when it became dark word was passed down the line to retreat to the same protection, one at a time, but those on the south end of the line did so at extreme peril. However the foe did not expect this move and did not have a chance to fire.
Attack on Convent.

The defenders were immediately posted at the various windows and doors and in a few minutes received the attack. Sergeant Rodriguez, the general of the insurgents, threw his men into the ditches facing the building and opened a hot fire by volleys. He evidently did not expect such valiant resistance, for with several men he approached the convent door from the side where the defenders could not reach them, and called to the Padre. The Father Superior answered that the place was full of women and children and that they could admit no one. When further questioned as to what soldiers were inside, he still answered that the convent was full of women and children and he could admit no one. Those outside then said that they were coming in so say a last mass for the Americans, and rushed the door. After a few shots had been sent through this obstruction by those inside, the attempt was abandoned.

It was during this part of the engagement that most of the Americans were wounded. The windows down stairs were very low and fitted with iron bars, and whenever a bullet struck these the lead was scattered and was sure to strike some one. Between 8:30 and 9:00 the attacking party withdrew and on their way out of town looted several stores. They had evidently tried to down a pill too big for their limited capacity.

Tarbell Arrives.

Strict watch was kept in the convent all night, as there was no way of getting news from the outside, and just before midnight prayers went up from all hearts when the sound of a bugle blowing the assembly was heard down the street which told that at last relief had arrived. Lieut. Tarbell approached the building sounding the march for guard mount so the defenders would not fire upon him, and when the doors were opened all rushed out with shouts of extreme joy. It had been a time to try the bravest and no one was ashamed to make manifest his feelings of thankfulness.

Lieut. Tarbell is a thorough soldier and his men were faithful to their duty in every respect. A party was immediately sent out to recover the body of Mr. Libby, and it was found where he had fallen. The enemy had not seen him, for the rifle, revolver, and ammunition were still on the body. The remains were brough back to town and turned over to Dr. Sibley.

American Soldiers Brought.

Early Wednesday morning Mr. Brown took the launch Euclid and started for Zamboanga to get a company of the 33rd infantry stationed there. He made the run in 58 hours, reaching the port at 2:00 a.m. Saturday, and at 6, B company, with 1st Lieut. Noble and 2nd Lieut. Dow in charge, attended by Dr. Coles, was on the way. The Coast Guard made the return trip in 30 hours, and it was with more glad hearts that they were welcomed.

After the attack Tuesday night, word was repeatedly sent in that the insurgents would attack the town again at stated times. As they had kept their word the first time, no risk was run and the company of Constabulary remained in town to repel these attacks if they should be made. When they failed to keep their word and come in Wednesday and Thursday, it was decided to go out after them; so Friday night Tarbell took his company, Libby, Hale, Reese, Clark, Templeton, and a Japanese doctor and started for Taloma, in which vicinity the foe was lurking. It was the intention to make a surprise attack before daybreak in the morning, but at 2:00 a.m. an accident occurred that caused the expedition to be abandoned.

Lamentable Accident.

The company was composed almost entirely of old and tried soldiers, but there were six or seven recruits who had never been under fire. When within a half-mile of Taloma and almost a mile of the deserters, these recruits became separated from the rest of the column. There was no trail and the swampy ground was thickly covered with hemp and dense undergrowth, a place where the best of soldiers would become lost. As the two divisions approached each other, the recruits thought their
comrades were the enemy slipping up on them and opened fire. Mr. Clark fell with a serious abdominal
wound, one soldier was killed instantly, and two others injured, one, it was feared, fatally. Tarbell
immediately blew his whistle to cease firing and further disaster was avoided.

It was imperative that the wounded be taken to the hospital, so doors from a nearby house
served as stretchers and the return march was made. Hale and Reese went ahead of the column to
notify the people in town. Luckily no attack was made on the return column and when the Davao river
was reached a boat was rigged up and the wounded soon turned over to the hospital.

After the firing and as soon as the men were lined up Tarbell and Templeton examined the
guns and learned only the above mentioned recruits had fired a shot, the old soldiers and the Americans
knowing enough not to fire till the command was given. Not a gun was lose, and the next morning
natives brought in the canteen, shoes, hat and personal effects of the dead one, as it was impossible for
the remains to be carried in the night before.

Take the Field.

At 6 Monday morning Noble left a guard in the convent and with the rest of his force and
Tarbell’s command went to Daleao to commence operations in the field. The Constabulary company
went south and the Americans north. Governor Walker is at present in Daleao anxiously waiting word
from the expeditions, but as yet no news has been received.

Side-Lights.

When the insurgents reached Taloma Monday morning and learned that they had failed to kill
their officers, they came back to town with the intention of murdering every white person in the place.
They seemed to realize that they could not come out of the affair with their lives and they wish to do all
the damage possible before they are killed. They handled themselves during the attack like experienced
soldiers and few white troops could have been more precise or cool in their movements. The commands
were given in excellent English, though changed somewhat to confuse the Americans, as for example,
the command “Forward, march” meant “Aim, fire.” It was soon seen that
such was the case and no
mistake made.

Those Engaged.

The following Americans were in town and took part in the engagement: Governor Walker,
McFie, Burchfield, P.C. and Roy Libby, Robinson, Brown, Mays, Reynolds, Schoppe, Welborn, Templeton,
Bumpus, Dr. Sibley, Roddy, Lieut. De Balaine, Hale, Birnbaum, Hanson and Stevens. Besides these, Capt.
Platka and Lieut. Golcouria were not able to take part. Platka is just recovering from a serious attack of
fever, and Golcouria is still down with his wounds received Sunday night.

Don Chicote

Too much can not be given Don Prudencio Chicote, the Justice of the Peace. He is an ex-
artilleryman of the Spanish army, and with his store of knowledge and vast courage did more possibly
than anyone else to keep spirits up, and his rifle did good service. During the attack on the convent he
was every place, with a word to advise and encourage the defenders and a shot for the enemy.

Mr. Vondermeyer, from Sta. Cruz, was also a brave addition to the forces. He came up with Mr.
Gohn Monday morning with his family and did all he could.

Dr. Hashimoto, a Japanese, could not have done more. He immediately took a rifle and belt
with the rest, and ably assisted Dr. Sibley in caring for the wounded, and worked without ceasing. There
were also a few other Spaniards who bore arms, one of whom Sr. Hernandez, was slightly wounded in
the shoulder.

The following received wounds: Golcouria, Stevens, Burchfield, Roddy, Welborn, and
Hernandez. All are doing nicely, none of the wounds being serious. Mr. Clark and the two soldiers
injured in the expedition Friday night are also on the road to recovery.
The Women

What would the world do without the women? Mesdames Burchfield, Roddy, De Balaine, Robinson, Sibley, and Chicote were an inspiration all during the fight. Not a murmur, Mrs. Vondermeyer had already lost a brother at the hands of the natives but was as brave as ever. Mrs. Sibley and Mrs. De Balaine are trained nurses and things would have been vastly different had they not been present to care for the wounded, while all never wavered but did what they could. During the anxious hours of the night, before assistance came, they were ready to mount guard with the exhausted men, to carry them food and drink, and do all in their power to give comfort to the besieged. After the troops came Mrs. Burchfield threw open her home and larder, issuing a hundred rations a day.

Church Succors Besieged.

The mission of the Church the world over is to carry spiritual and physical aid to all, and in this instance her servants did their duty nobly. The Father Superior, Father Lynch and the other Brothers gave shelter to the people of the town and all during the fight carried bread, wine, and water to those handling the guns, sometime running great risk in doing so. The rooms were open to the ladies, and with comforts and self-sacrifice they won a warm place in the hearts of the grateful defenders, while they sent up prayer after prayer for the safety of their friends.

Suspicious Actions.

There was only a small guard left here when the troops took the field, so no aggressive action can come from the town at present. It was learned last night (Tuesday) that Rodriguez, the leader, and two of his men had been in town in civilian clothes and without arms, but they could not be found. There seems to be something more back of this affair than appears on the surface for the natives are very reluctant about giving what information they know. Some of them even joined the insurgents and were in the attack on the Convent, while there were others that by some means kept the enemy informed about the movements of the Americans. During the fight some people were seen in one of the houses waving a cloth to show the foe where to go, but when a few bullets were sent through the building this ceased.

Gulf Planters Come.

As soon as word could be got to the various planters on the Gulf they immediately responded to the call and rushed to the assistance of their friends. Most of them were too late for the fight, but did guard duty cheerfully when they arrived. Mr. Gohn was in command of part of the forces and did nobly, as did all present. After the company came from Zamboanga, most of them had to return to their plantations. There were about 10 in all here, the largest body of Americans ever assembled in the town at one time.

In Memoriam.

Roy Libby, who so bravely gave up his life in defense of his friends, was born in Minneapolis August 13, 1881. He enlisted in 1900 and served in the Hospital Corps during the advance upon Pekin, and was one of the few who ever entered those walls. His service record is a credit to anyone. He was later sent to the Philippines where he completed his enlistment in 1903. Since that time he has been civil engineer with various railroads and a developing company in Tacoma, Washington. He came to Davao in October, 1908, to assist his brother, P.C. Libby on their plantation.

A nobler or truer boy was never known. He had a smile and good word for all and was a general favorite on the Gulf. He could not do too much for a friend, even to laying down his life in their defense. The remains were laid to rest in the center of the Plaza Wednesday afternoon, with military honors. The services were read by Dr. Sibley and the ladies sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee," while not an eye was dry. The bereaved brother is a philosopher and took the blow as one, but his youngest brother, the only remaining one of the family, is no more, and his heart is broken.
Troops Wanted.

For some time past the planters have desired white troops on the Gulf, but could not get them. All effort will now be made to realize this, but the cost has been great.

Davao, Mind., June 16, 1909

(Sgd.) A.M. Templeton

Deputy Superintendent of Schools.

APPENDIX B

H.A. No. 122164
SALOME (BAGOBA)  
H.A. No. 151253
AGUILANON (BAGOBO) Deceased  
Rep. by INCOL AGUILANON (Son)
Applicants & Contestants

vs.

S.A. No. 15031
JOSE A. CASTRO
Applicant & Respondent

DECISION

On December 10, 1932, a decision was rendered in this case, the pertinent paragraphs of which read as follows:

“The records show that the land in controversy was inside the forest zone at the time the contending parties filed their respective applications therefore; and that the certification of the said land by the Director of Forestry as disposable for agricultural purposes was made only on December 1, 1932. It thus results that none of the parties herein is entitled to preferential right to the land in dispute by virtue of prior filing of application. The evidence, however, shows that the contestants have been long occupying and improving portions of the land which they subsequently applied for under their respective homestead applications; and that these occupied portions are now planted with several hills of abaca. Under this condition, it is but just and equitable that they should be entitled to the land which has been occupied and improved by them.

“This regards the sales application of Jose A. Castro, it has been found that the latter is not the real party interested in the land applied for by him as he has allowed several Japanese subjects to occupy and improve it. This is in violation of the provisions of Act No. 2874.

“In view of the foregoing, Castro’s Sales Application No. 10031 therefor is hereby rejected, and the homestead applications of the contestants, shall be amended to cover the portions improved by them as indicated in the sketch drawn on the back hereof. The District Land Officer of District No. 31, Davao, Davao, is directed to take possession of the portions occupied by the Japanese and administer the land until disposed of by this Office.”

Jose A Castro filed a motion for the reconsideration of that decision, alleging, in substance, that he was not notified of the investigation of this case and, consequently, he did not have the opportunity to present evidence in support of his claim; that he is the real party interested in his sales application; that he had invested over ₱10,000.00 in the improvement of the land covered thereby; and that the Japanese subjects who had cleared and occupied that land had been employed by him merely as laborers thereon. By reason of that motion, an order was entered by this Office on April 11, 1933, directing that this case be reinvestigated.

At the reinvestigation, contestant Salome (Bagoba) was represented by her son, Sianan Banda (Bagobo) who presented in support of her claim, his own testimony to the effect that several Japanese laborers had worked in the homestead of his mother in spite of her objection; that they had been hired by the Japanese manager of the herein respondent to work thereon; that before those Japanese laborers began to cultivate a portion of his mother’s homestead, he and his mother had already been in
possession thereof; and that those laborers were, however, no longer working on the premises because they had already sold their “abaca” to her mother. Sianan Banda also presented as evidence Exhibits “A-Salome”, “A-1-Salome”, and “B-Salome”. Exhibit “A-Salome” is a carbon copy of a deed of sale executed on June 13, 1933, by a Japanese named Nubo Saito in favor of Salome (Bagoba), the relevant part of which reads as follows:

“That I (Nubo Saito) am the absolute owner of Twelve Thousand (12,000) hills of abaca planted in the land originally applied for by Salome (Bagobo) under H.A. No. 122184 x x x;

“That I have planted said abaca under the provision of a contract executed by me, with Mr. Jenkiche Acama, before Notary Public Attorney Sofronio Gonzales, in about the year 1929, the copies being kept by said Attorney Sofronio Gonzales; But

“That the important contestants of said contract are as follows:

1. That I have to clear the forest, and plant abaca at my own expenses, labor and capital;

2. That I will have to pay all forest charges if any in the name of Jose A. Castro;

3. That I have to pay to Mr. Jose A. Castro thru Mr. Jenkiche Acama fifteen percentum (15%) of the proceed of all the abaca products that will be stripped and sold by me;

4. That the duration of the contract is fifteen (15) years, counting from 1928 but can be extended at my option to another TEN (10) years; x x x x’

“That Salome (Bagoba) having shown to me the decision of the Director of Lands rendered on December 10, 1932, which provides that the Sales Application No. 16031 of Jose A. Castro has been cancelled, I have voluntarily begged Salome (Bagoba) to pay me my abacas x x x a very reasonable price x x x;

“Now x x x x in consideration of the sum of Six Hundred Pesos (₱600.00) the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged x x x paid to me by Salome (Bagoba) I do hereby transfer, sell, and convey by way of absolute sale unto said Salome (Bagoba) x x x all the Twelve Thousand (12,000) hills of abaca planted by me x x x x;

“That I have to protect the rights to and interest in of Salome (Bagoba) acquired by her by virtue of this deed of sale, against all claims.”

Exhibit “A-1-Salome” is a certified true copy of the receipt signed by Nubo Saito of the sum of ₱600.00 as payment for 12,000 hills of abaca planted by him in the land applied for by Salome (Bagoba). Exhibit “B-Salome” is a certified true copy of the deed of sale executed by another Japanese Hachiro Goya in favor of Salome (Bagoba) on June 14, 1933, the pertinent part of which reads as follows:

“That I (Hachiro Goya) as the absolute owner of TEN THOUSAND (10,000) hills of abaca planted in the land originally applied for by Salome (Bagobo) under H.A. No. 122184. Bounded x x x x.

“That I have acquired these abaca under a deed of Sale executed by Mr. Sueyoshi Unto in my favor who is a Japanese, of legal age, and who is now in Japan on a vacation.

“That these abaca were planted on the land under the provisions of a contract executed by Mr. Sueyoshie Unto with Mr. Jose A. Castro who was represented by Jenkiche Acama, known to be the overseer of Japanese tenants covering several hundreds hectares of
land in Tagluno. The original contract executed by Mr. Sueyoshi Unito is being kept by Attorney Sofronio Gonzales. A private contract written in Japanese character is the one exhibited to me and which contain the same on the one signed by Mr. Sueyoshi Unito and ratified before Notary Public Mr. Sofronio Gonzales.

“Having been made to understand the contents of the decision of the Director of Lands dated December 16, 1932, I regret very much to lose the money invested in good faith on the abaca, above described, I voluntarily begged Salome (Bagoba) to pay even a much bargain price acceptable during this period of monetary crisis.

“Now in consideration of the sum of FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (₱500.00) the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, to have been paid to me by Salome (Bagoba) a resident of Tagluno, Guianga, Davao, and whose Post Office address is c/o P.O. Box No. 156 Davao, Davao, do hereby transfer, sell, and convey by way of absolute sale unto said Salome (Bagoba) her heirs and assigns, all the TEN THOUSAND (10,000) hills of abaca owned by me in the land covered by her homestead as above described.

“That I have to protect the rights to and interests in of Salome (Bagoba) acquired by her by virtue of this deed of sale against all claims.”

Contestant Aguianon (Bagobo), who died after the rendition of the decision aforementioned, was represented at that reinvestigation by his son, Incol Aguianon. The latter presented as evidence his own testimony to the effect that two Japanese subjects worked in his father’s homestead; that they worked therein, as they had been asked to by the manager of the respondent, in spite of the fact that they were prohibited by his father; and that they had already sold their “abaca” to his father, and are no longer working thereon. He also presented as evidence Exhibits “A-Aguianon”, “A-1-Aguianon”, “B-Aguianon”, and “B-1-Aguianon”. Exhibit “A-Aguianon” is a carbon copy of the deed of sale executed on June 13, 1933, by a Japanese by the name of Togyo Nakandacare in favor of Aguianon (Bagobo), the pertinent contents of which are as follows:

“That I (Togyo Nakandacare) am the absolute owner of Six Thousand (6,000) hills of abaca planted in the land originally applied for by Aguianon (Bagobo) under H.A. No. 151253 x x x;

“That I have planted said abaca under the provisions of a contract executed by me, with Mr. Jose A. Castro represented by Mr. Jenkiche Acama, before Notary Public Attorney Sofronio Gonzales, in about the year 1929, the copies being kept by said Attorney Sofronio Gonzales; But

“That the important contents of said contract are as follows:

‘1. That I have to clear the forest, and plant abaca at my own expenses, labor and capital;

‘2. That I will have to pay from my pocket all forest charges of the timbers cut for and in the name of Jose A. Castro;

‘3. That I have to pay to Mr. Jose A. Castro thru Mr. Jenkiche Acama fifteen per centum (15%) of the proceed of all the abaca products that will be stripped and sold by me;

‘4. That the duration of the contract is fifteen (15) years, counting from 1929 but can be extended at my option to another ten (10) years; x x x.’

“That Aguianon (Bagoba) having shown to me the decision of the Director of Lands rendered on December 10, 1932, x x x I have voluntarily begged Aguianon (Bagobo) to pay me my abaca planted in his H.A. No. 151253 at a very reasonable price acceptable during this period of monetary crisis;
"Now x x x, in considerations of the sum of Three Hundred Pesos (P300.00) the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, to have been paid to me by Aguianon Bagobo x x x do hereby transfer, sell and convey by way of absolute sale unto said Aguianon (Bagobo) his heirs and assigns, all the Six Thousand (6,000) hills of abaca planted by me in the land covered by homestead as above described;

“That I have to protect the rights to and interest in of Mr. Aguianon Bagobo required by him by virtue of this deed of sale, against all claims.”

Exhibit “A-1-Aguianon” is a certified true copy of the receipt for the sum of ₱300.00 signed by Japanese Togyo Nakandacare as complete payment for the abaca planted by him in the land applied for by Aguianon (Bagobo). Exhibit “E-Aguianon” is a carbon copy of the deed of sale executed on June 13, 1953 by Japanese Kohoko Kuhama in favor of Aguianon (Bagobo), the pertinent parts of which read as follows:

“That I (Kohoko Kuhama) am the absolute owner of Five Thousand (5,000) hills of abaca planted in the land originally applied for by Aguianon Bagobo under H.A. No. 151253 x x x;

“That I have planted said abacas under the provisions of a contract executed by me, with Mr. Jose A. Castro represented by Mr. Jenkiche Acama, before Notary Public Attorney Sofronio Gonzales, in about the year 1929, the copies being kept by said Attorney Sofronio Gonzales; But

“That the important contents of said contract are as follows:

‘1. That I have to clear the forest, and plant abaca at my own expenses, labor and capital;

‘2. That I will have to pay all forest charges if any in the name of Jose A. Castro;

‘3. That I have to pay Mr. Jose A. Castro thru Mr. Jenkiche Acama fifteen per centum (15%) of the proceed of all the abaca products that will be stripped and sold by me;

‘4. That the duration of the contract is fifteen (15) years, counting from 1929 but can be extended at my option to another ten (10) years; x x x’

“That Aguianon (Bagobo) having shown to me the decision of the Director of Lands rendered on December 10, 1932, x x x I have voluntarily begged Aguianon (Bagobo) to pay me my abacas planted in his H.A. No. 151253 at a very reasonable price acceptable during this period of monetary crisis.

“Now x x x, in consideration of the sum of Two Hundred Fifty Pesos (₱250.00) the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, to have been paid to me by Aguianon (Bagobo) x x x do hereby transfers, sell, and convey by way of absolute sale unto said Aguianon (Bagobo) his heirs and assigns, all the Six Thousand (6,000) hills of abaca planted by me in the land covered by his homestead as above described.

“That I have to protect the rights to and interest in of Mr. Aguianon Bagobo required by him by virtue of his deed of sale, against all claims.”

Exhibit “B-1-Aguianon” is a certified true copy of the receipt for the sum of ₱250.00 signed by Japanese Kohoko Kuhama.
On the other hand, respondent Castro presented the testimonies of (1) Ambrosio Galisin, a ranger of the Bureau of Forestry; (2) Antonio Feliciano, the Municipal Treasurer of Davao, Davao; and (3) of J. Acama, his manager.

Galisin substantially testified that when he inspected the land applied for by Castro, he found that with the exception of an area of about four hectares planted to abaca by Bagobos, it was covered with virgin forests; that the same was covered by Castro’s pasture permit (Ordinary Pasture Permit No. F-1942-D) issued to him by the Bureau of Forestry, for which he had paid annual rentals; that Aguianon (Bagobo) and Salome (Bagobo) never went to his Office in order to claim the ownership of the abaca planted on some portion thereof; and that the cultivated areas were located in two different places; and that the land applied for by respondent Castro had already been certified for agricultural purposes by the Bureau of Forestry.

Antonio Feliciano testified in substance that he is the authorized agent of respondent Castro; that the improvements on the premises consist of abaca plantations and buildings; that he was appointed agent because respondent Castro could not have time to attend personally to the cultivation of the premises; that he received about P4,000 from respondent Castro to be invested in the cultivation of the land; that, of the said amount, he gave P1,000.00 to Japanese J. Acama for the construction of buildings and for wages of Japanese Sueshi, a laborer; and that Acama contracted three Japanese laborers to work inside the land applied for by respondent Castro.

Jenkiche Acama testified also to the effect that he was appointed “encargado” by respondent Castro in 1929; that the land in question was yet forested; that respondent Castro informed him at the beginning that the existing abaca plantations on the premises were planted by “Incol Aguianon and Siauan Bagobo”, whom he would pay each P100.00 “per hectare of abaca” on the land; that he himself paid P400.00 to Incol Aguianon and Siauan Banda (Bagobo) for the four “hectares of abaca” planted by them inside the land applied for by respondent Castro in seven or eight installments; that he could produce no receipt therefor; that he has no written authority of Castro to enter into a contract for the employment of Japanese laborers to work on the land applied for by the respondent, but the latter (Castro) signed the contracts, while he (Acama) signed the same as mere witness; that he could not produce any copy of the said contract; that when he acted as “encargado” of respondent Castro, the condition was that, of the abaca harvested from the land, 5% would be his share, 10% Castro’s share and 85% the share of the planters; that the Japanese laborers who planted the abacas furnished the capital; and that Castro visited the land only twice, once when it was yet timber land and again when the clearing was begun.

Castro presented also as evidence Exhibit 1, Ordinary Pasture Permit No. P-1942-D; Exhibits 2 and 3, Official Receipts Nos. 6659421 and 6334242 for the sums of P44.00 and P33.00 paid as 1930 and 1929 rentals respectively on account of the aforementioned pasture permit; Exhibit 4, a promissory note for the sum of P75.00 executed by Zenkiche Acama in favor of “Messrs. Siawan (Bagobo) and Incol Aguianon (Bagobo)”; exhibit 5, a copy of deed, executed by respondent Castro conferring upon Antonio Feliciano the power of attorney to represent him in all his dealings relative to the land in question; Exhibit 6, letter of the Deputy of Collector of Internal Revenue to respondent Castro regarding the settlement of his forestry liability in the sum of P628.17; and Exhibits 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20, which are official invoices and official receipts, showing that Castro has paid forestry charges. In addition to the foregoing evidence, Castro also presented a memorandum, thru counsel, stating therein among other things that there are no more Japanese laborers on the land applied for by him.

As was already held in the decision in this case of December 10, 1932, which is now sought to be reconsidered, none of the parties herein could have acquired the right of preference by reason of the priority of the filing of his application. This is because all their applications were filed at the time when the land in question was not yet disposable under the Public Land law. Consequently, the question of who of them has preference right over the others with respect to the land in dispute, must be decided on the basis of actual bona fide occupation. It is a well settled doctrine that “An application to make entry of public land cannot be allowed if based on preliminary papers executed prior to the time when said land is legally subject to such appropriation.” (Smith vs. Malone, 16 L.D. 482.) A right to acquire title to lands can only be initiated after they become subject to entry. (See Sections 93-95 of Act No. 2874).
The contestants, therefore, are entitled to the parts of the land in dispute which they have respectively cultivated in good faith and are occupying actually.

As regards the remaining portion of the land in question, it should be noted that the improvements thereon were made by Kubo Saito, Hachiro Goya, Togyo Nakandacare, and Kuhoko Kuhama—all Japanese subjects—at their own expense; that they had to pay even the forest charges, if any on these portions; that they were the absolute owners of those improvements consisting of abaca plants to the herein contestants. It is therefore, unnecessary to discuss at length the claim of the contestants that the said Japanese subjects were merely his laborers, for the purpose of showing that the said claim is absolutely without foundation of fact. It is likewise unnecessary to make a detailed explanation in order to show that the respondent has falsely made under oath the following statement:

"In making this application for purchase, I am not acting as agent of any person x x; and I am not in collusion with any person x x to give them the benefits of the land entered or any part thereof x x x. I will not, directly or indirectly, make any agreement or contract x x x by which any right or rights which I may acquire from the government will or may inure in whole or in part to the benefit of any person x x x."

and that he has violated Section 89 of the Public Lands Act.

In view of the foregoing, Sales Application No. 5031 of Jose A. Castro should remain, as is, rejected; and the disposition of the decision rendered in this case on December 10, 1932, should be enforced.

SO ORDERED.

Manila, P.I., October 1, 1935.

SIMEON RAMOS
Director of Lands

GLOSSARY

Abaca. A cordage fiber, also known as Manila hemp
Agong. A metal gong
Appliquè. Several pieces of fabric embroidered together into one design
Arrastre. Stevedoring operation of loading and unloading goods on piers
Auto-calesa. A three-wheeled motorized vehicle or a four-wheeled carriage
Bagani. A warrior
Baile. A dance party
Barquillos. A pastry of rolled thin wafer
Bejuco. A tropical climbing plant used in the manufacture of baskets and other furniture
Betel nut. The seed of a palm
Bodega. A building for storage of goods, a warehouse
Bico. A sticky rice cake
Birador. A person who pulls stalks from the hagotan
Bukayo. A sticky dessert of slivered coconut meat boiled in coconut water mixed with sugar
Buwa. The soft and edible coconut embryo
Cabecera. A town or the capital of a parish
Camarin. A dormitory
Camote. A yam
Canela. Cinnamon
Capataz. A foreman
Carabao. A water buffalo
Cargadores. Porters
Chabacano. Mixed or creole
Cogon. Wild grass with tall blades
Colorums. Private vehicles for hire, but not registered with the government as public transports
**Comparsa.** A troupe of performers in a carnival

**Copra.** Dried coconut meat

**Cine.** Refers to a movie or a moviehouse

**Cristiano.** A Christianized and Hispanized Filipino

**Dabawenyo.** A local of Davao

**Dashi.** Soup stock usually made from dried kelp or dried fish such as bonito, tuna, and/or anchovies

**Datu.** A chief or aristocrat

**De lata.** A canned good

**Descubrimiento, conquista, poblacion.** Spanish colonial slogan for “discovery, conquest and settlement”

Donkey engine. A steam-powered winch

**Duligun.** A worm

**Ensaymada.** A sweet bread usually topped with sugar and cheese

**Fiesta.** A public celebration derived from honoring a patron saint

Fire saw. Sticks that produce fire when rubbed together

**Hagotan.** An abaca stripping machine

**Hanks.** Bundles of stripped fiber

**Infieles.** A colonial Spanish term for “infidels,” also pertains to non-Christsians and tribal peoples

**Jeisha.** Small, independent Japanese farmers

**Jolens.** Marbles for playing games

**Kaignin.** Swidden agriculture, or the practice of clearing the land by cutting and burning vegetation; also denotes cleared land

**Kangkong.** A green leafy vegetable that grows in swampy areas

**Kawa.** A large cooking vat

**Kota.** A fort

**Kubing.** A Bagobo jaw harp

**Kulintang.** A musical instrument comprised of several medium-sized brass gongs, played with a wooden stick

**Leche flan.** A light custard cake

**Limpisador.** A worker who maintains the field by cutting grass
Lumad. Indigenous people
Maestra. A female teacher
Maestro. A male teacher
Makina goya. A shed for the hagotan machine
Malong. A cloth with two ends woven together that has many uses as clothing
Manjo. Japanese sweet pastry often made from flour, pounded rice, sugar, and bean paste
Masalicampo. A term used to address Manobo elders indicating a privileged stature
Merienda. Tea or snack time; also refers to light pastries
Mestiza/Mestizo. People of mixed blood who have a combination of Filipino, Spanish, Chinese and/or American ancestry
Mongo. Mung beans
Mongo con hielo. A sweet refreshment of mung beans with ice
Mongo-ya. Japanese for mongo con hielo
Mukkuri. A Japanese jaw harp
Oldtimer. A person who has lived in Davao before the Second World War
Orang bessar. A man of prowess
Pakyaw. Wholesale
Palma brava. Multi-stemmed palm with hard stalks
Piña. Fine textile made from pineapple fiber
Polo y servicio. A system of forced labor service in Spanish Philippines
Pueblo. A municipal district
Rancheria. A small indigenous settlement
Reconquista. The Catholic reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Mohammedan Moors
Reduccion. A Spanish settlement, usually established by missionaries
Rigodon. A formal dance
Runo. A reed-like plant
Sacup. Followers of an indigenous chief
Santacruzan. A religious procession held during the summertime
Sari-sari store. Family-owned small variety store; see tienda
Sinkali. A brass chain

Storax. Fragrant resin used as incense

Terno. A Filipino dress made from piña-cloth, with puffed sleeves

Tienda. A small variety store

Timbrera. A small metal food container

Tuba. A liquor made from fermented coconut water

Tuxero. A worker who peels tuxies from the abaca stalks with a special knife

Tuxy. Ribbon-like fibers slit from the outer sheath of an abaca stalk

Visita. Ecclesiastical term for a small village serviced by a non-resident priest
A Note On Sources

This thesis relies primarily on archival research for sources of historical data. These sources take the form of official and non-official reports, letters and correspondences, newspaper articles, manuscripts, photographs, artifacts, official transcripts, and other available media. The main archival research was undertaken at the United States National Archives II at College Park, Maryland, especially on Record Group 350 of the Bureau of Insular Affairs which was the Washington-based office responsible for the administration of the Philippines and other U.S. colonies. Since the early administrative history of Davao was under U.S. Army rule, the National Archives I in Washington, D.C. was consulted for pre-World War I military records, and the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle, Pennsylvania for papers of the soldiers of various U.S. Army regiments, including those of Gen. Tasker Bliss.

In Washington, D.C., materials in the U.S. Library of Congress, especially the papers of Moro Province Administrators Gen. Leonard Wood and Gen. John J. Pershing, as well as periodicals, the McCubbin, and the Robert Bullard collections were also perused. The papers of Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf at the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology Archives in Virginia were also accessed. The two Chicago-based research institutions, The Field Museum, and, the Newberry Library, were visited for the papers of anthropologists Laura Watson Benedict and Fay-Cooper Cole in the former, and the Ayer Collection, the Graff Collection, and other Filipiniana manuscripts and photographs in the latter Library.

In Ann Arbor, the papers of Dean Worcester, Joseph Ralston Hayden, Frank Murphy and Santiago Artiaga at the Bentley Historical Library, and the Worcester Philippine History Collection located at the Special Collections Library of the University of Michigan, were the subjects of a month-long research fellowship. Several days were spent at Emory University’s Manuscript and Rare Books Library in Atlanta to research the sizeable collection of Patrick H. Frank, a Davao planter and businessman. While the Yale University Divinity School Library was accessed for the papers of Davao-based missionaries Walter and Margaret Tong. Finally, the papers of Evelyn Burchfield, who lived in pre-war Davao, were digitized and made available on-line by the Archives and Folklife Division of Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green.
Accessed in Manila were the boxes on Davao land cases in the Jose P. Laurel Foundation that Laurel’s law firm handled in the 1930s. Other law cases filed in the Philippine Supreme court were checked online through the Chan-Robles and Arellano University websites. Visits were also made to the National Library microfilm section for Davao-related subjects. In Quezon City, the Filipiniana Section and the American Historical Collection of the Ateneo de Manila University’s Rizal Library were consulted, as well as the Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus for early twentieth century materials on the Davao mission.

In Davao City, the baptismal records of San Pedro Church, the only parish in Davao from the nineteenth century until the Second World War, provide data on the places of provenance of the settler/parents of the Catholic majority in Davao during the period of study. An important supplement to documentary materials were interviews with the ‘oldtimers’ conducted in Davao City that provided personal information on 1930s life in the city and its environs. The families of some of the interviewees were also kind enough to share photographs for academic research.

1. Primary Sources


   An Act Creating the Entry Port of Davao, 1823 Act § First Philippine Legislature (1908).


Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903. Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1904.


Department of Agriculture and Commerce. Land Resources of the Philippines. Manila: Commonwealth of the Philippines, 1939.


Legislative Council of the Moro Province. An act providing for the establishment of markets for the moro and other non-christian inhabitants of the moro province and defining their objects and purposes and for other purposes, 216 § (1908).

———. An act to provide a system of industrial trading stations in the Moro Province for the use, benefit, and development of the moro and other non-christian tribes thereof, 267 § (1911).


https://archive.org/stream/aaf7627.0001.001.umich.edu#page/58/mode/2up.


“Report of Lands in the Philippine Islands Sold or Leased, or Contracted to Be Sold or Leased, by the Government of the Philippine Islands since July 1st, 1902, in
Tracts of More than Sixteen Hectares to One Person, or Ten Hundred Twenty-Four Hectares to Any Corporation, or Association of Persons, Stating in Each Case the Number of Hectares Sold or Leased, or Contracted to Be Sold or Leased, Name of Purchaser or Lessee, and since Such Purchaser or Lessee Shall Have Attempted to Make Such Purchase as Agent or Factor for Any Other Person, Association or Corporations, Then the Name of Such Person, Association or Corporation, If Known; Whether Such Lands Were Part of the Public Domain of the Philippine Islands or Friar Lands, the Price or Rental Paid or to Be Paid in Each Case; Also Applications Pending for Sale or Lease of Any Such Lands in the Philippine Islands in Lots or Tracts of More than Sixteen Hectares to Any Individual or Ten Hundred Twenty-Four Hectares Ot Any Corporation or Association or Individuals,” May 5, 1910.


Statistical Handbook of the Philippine Islands. Manila, 1932.
The Public Land Act, 926 Act § (1903).
Wester, P.J. Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago: Their Natural Resources and Opportunities for Development. Manila: Bureau of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1922.
———. By the Governor General of the Philippine Islands - A Proclamation, 20 § (1926).
b. Court Cases

A. Matute vs. Cheong Boo, No. G.R. L-11109 (Supreme Court January 7, 1918).
E. Matute et. al vs. A. Matute, No. G.R. No. L-42626 (December 21, 1935).
Moreland, J. The United States vs. Manuel Rodriguez, et al., No. G.R. No. L-6344 (Supreme Court of the Philippines March 21, 1911).
The National Coal Company vs the Public Utility Commission et al, No. G.R.L-23047 (Supreme Court January 30, 1925).
The Philippine Shipowner’s Association, La Compania Maritima and Fernandez Hermanos vs. Mariano Cui, Public Utility Commissioner, No. G.R. L-24672 (Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands December 2, 1925).

c. Other Publications, Reports, Correspondence and Manuscript

———. “Memo to Bureau of Insular Affairs, from Chief Signal Officer of the Army on Publications Issued by International Bureau at Berne,” January 20, 1913.


— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, February 11, 1907,” February 11, 1907.

— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, March 10, 1907,” March 10, 1907.

— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, April 7, 1907,” April 7, 1907.

— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, April 23, 1907,” April 23, 1907.

— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, September 5, 1907,” September 5, 1907.

— — —. “Benedict to Dorsey, November 9, 1907,” November 9, 1907.


— — —. “Twenty-Five Years with the Filipinos,” n.d. Manuscript & Folklife Archives. Western Kentucky Special Collections Library.


Committee of Rope and Twine Manufacturers and Manila Hemp Importers. “Committee of Rope and Twine Manufacturers and Manila Hemp Importers to C. Walcutt, February 26, 1919,” February 26, 1919.


Dewey, Lyster H. “Copy of Report of Investigation in Regard to Weak and Imperfect Manila Fiber Received from the Philippines,” December 4, 1903.

Diaz, Jose V. “Memorandum for the Applicant & Respondent, Cipriano Villafuerte,” September 1, 1933. Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


———. “Dorsey to Cummings, July 15, 1907,” July 15, 1907.

———. “Dorsey to Jones, October 12, 1908,” October 12, 1908.


———. General Order No. 33 of the Bureau of Agriculture (1914).


Frank, Samuel B. “Sam Frank to Fran,” April 17, 1941. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library. Emory University.

——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” April 27, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” May 3, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” May 13, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” June 8, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” June 16, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” July 28, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” August 23, 1941.
——.—. “Sam Frank to Fran,” November 17, 1941.

Gairolas, Antonio S.J. “Gairolas to Father Superior, September 1, 1904,” September 1, 1904. Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus.


——.—. “Gohn to the Secretary of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands,” April 7, 1926.


Hanson & Orth. “Memorandum from Hanson & Orth, New York to U.S. Navy Department, Department of the Interior, U.S. Treasury, Etc.,” July 26, 1941. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


Hilado, Serafin P. Reorganization of Mindanao Units and Establishment of the office of the special agent for Mindanao, 18 Administrative Order § Official Gazette (1931).


Insular Bureau. “Letter to the Chief Signal Officer, United States Army,” January 24, 1913.


Jones, Rose. ”Rose Jones to Fran, July 11, 1941,” July 11, 1941. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library. Emory University.

———. “Rose Jones to Gen, July 21, 1941,” July 21, 1941.


Laurel, Del Rosario and Sabido. “Case Brief of Batao Bala (Bagobo),” n.d. Batao Bala (Bagobo) Folder. Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation.


“Logbook of Letter Sent to the Commanding Officer in Davao,” July 7, 1902.


Military Governor in the Philippine Islands, May 16, 1901. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


McCullough, Max L. “The District of Davao.” Philippine Agricultural Review 1, no. 7 (July 1908).

MacDaniel, J.S. Statement of J.S. MacDaniel, Chairman Cordage Institute, § Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs (1930).


———. Memorandum. “Memorandum for the Governor General from Aeronautics Division, Department of Public Works and Communications.” Memorandum, July 3, 1934.


———. “F. McIntyre to Henry W. Peabody & Co.,” Telegram, June 17, 1918.


———. “F. McIntyre to L. Wood,” July 28, 1924.


———. “F. McIntyre to The Upson-Walton Company,” May 6, 1911. 16294 Hemp Inquiries, 1898-1914.

———. “Frank McIntyre to Lindsay Brothers,” April 16, 1910. 16294 Hemp Inquiries, 1898-1914.


———. “Memorandum for the Secretary of War,” July 13, 1921.


Morrow, Jay. “Report of Headquarters Department of Mindanao, Office of Engineer Officer to the Chief Engineer Officer, Division of the Philippines, Manila.” Zamboanga, P.I.: Headquarters Department of Mindanao, May 13, 1903.


Pershing, John J. “Pershing to L.A. Shoppe in Davao, Mindanao,” January 4, 1911.


Public Lands and Franchises, Statement of Elihu Root, Secretary of War, § Committee on Insular Affairs (1902).


Redfield, William. “Commerce Secretary William Redfield to Secretary of War,” January 24, 1919.


Reyes, Faustino. “Reyes to Jose P. Laurel,” July 15, 1932.


“Statement by Senator Sergio Osmeña, President Protempore of the Philippine Senate and Special Representative of the Philippine Legislature to the United States,” January 19, 1926. Public Lands. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


———. “Margaret to Aunt Wray, Grandmother, and Uncle Rogers,” March 8, 1932.

———. “Margaret to Family Members,” December 15, 1932.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” December 31, 1933.

———. “Margaret to Alice,” January 8, 1934.

———. “Margaret to Alice,” March 5, 1934.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” July 27, 1934.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” October 10, 1934.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” December 27, 1934.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” February 12, 1935.


———. “Margaret to Mother,” April 4, 1935.

———. “Margaret to Mother, Good Friday 1935,” April 19, 1935.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” June 1935.

———. “Margaret to Nana,” July 20, 1940.

———. “Margaret to Mother,” October 17, 1940.

———. “Margaret to Alice,” June 21, 1941.

———. “Margaret to Jack, Johnnie and Anne,” September 2, 1941.


———. “Walter to Mother and All,” November 2, 1940.


———. “Memorandum: Strengthening the Market of Manila Hemp,” n.d.


Ware, Mary S. *The Old World Through Old Eyes: Three Years in Oriental Lands*. New York; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917.


Young, James T. “Letter of Professor James T. Young to the War Department,” November 2, 1901. 2146 Roads & bridges, 1898-1913. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


d. Newspapers and Periodicals (in chronological order)

i. American Chamber of Commerce Journal


“From Army Clerk to Plantation Owner: One Man’s Winnings from Davao Jungle.” *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, January 1926.


“Mr. and Mrs. Gaches...” *American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, May 1926.


“Manila Hemp” Its Prospects of 4,000,000 Filipinos.” *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, May 1935.


ii. The Philippines Free Press


iii. **The Philippines Herald**


iv. **The Mindanao Herald**


v. **Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin**


### vi. Other Newspapers and Periodicals


“Open the Hemp Ports.” *Boston Sunday Herald*, January 1, 1900.


Personal Name Files. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.


“Fiber Production Falling off Considerably.” *El Ideal*. April 14, 1921.


“Fernandez Reveals His Indebtedness to the Bank.” *El Debate*. August 18, 1923.


“Philippines-Berlin.” *Far Eastern Review*, June 1933.

“El Telefono Manila-Italia Inaugurado.” *La Opinion*, June 20, 1933.


e. Photographs, Maps and Illustrations

Algue, Jose Maria S.J. *Mouth of the Caraga River, Davao*. Photograph, 1905. The Newberry Library.


Cupid Studio. *Davao Group Photo*. Photograph, Pre-war. Private Collection of Nenita Azarcon.


———. *Bringing Hemp to Town*. Photograph Post Card, 1924. Carl Eugen Guthe Collections. Bentley Historical Library.


Lucita Lim Cuadra at 13 Years Old, Miss Industrial, Davao City 1930. Photograph, 1930. Francisco Family Archives.


Metcalf, Elizabeth H. and Sara S. 102s Group of Men Clearing... Photograph, August 1906. Smithsonian Department of Anthropology.


Mikado Studio. Davao Wharf, 1930s, 1930s. Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.


“Philippine Folder, Davao and Zamboanga Areas.” Supplement No. 2. AGS Terrain Study. Allied geographical Section, SWPA and Engineer Intelligence Section, OCE, August 13, 1944. Bhur Stacks. University of Michigan.

PUs along San Pedro Street, 1930. Photograph, 1930. Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.


San Pedro Church and Plaza. Photograph, 1900s. Private Collection of Vincent Garcia.

f. Oral Sources
Baluyut, Marylin A. Interview with Marylin A. Baluyut. Audio, May 6, 2015.
Christensen, Lucy. Interview with Lucy Christensen, May 18, 2015.
Ebro Pelayo, Lucy. Interview with Lucy Ebro Pelayo, June 18, 2015.
Lapaza Fulgarinas, Quirina. Interview with Quirina Lapaza Fulgarinas, May 21, 2015.
Ledesma, Jorge. Interview with Jorge Ledesma, June 7, 2015, June 7, 2015.
Lizada, Tessie. Interview with Tessie Lizada, September 29, 2015.
Mahinay, Avelina V. Interview with Avelina V. Mahinay, June 15, 2015.
Ondus, Sergio Intos. Interview with Sergio Intos Ondus, May 27, 2015.
Quiba, Gloria. Interview with Gloria Quiba, May 27, 2015.
Rodriguez, Julian, Jr. Interview with Julian Rodriguez, Jr., June 8, 2015.
2. **Secondary Sources**

**a. Books, Articles and Papers**


Fernandez, Doreen G. Culinary Culture of the Philippines, n.d.


Magallanes, Monina Suarez. Sang Una... (Once upon a Time). Davao City, Philippines: Monina Suarez Magallanes, 2011.


Rajal, Joaquin. *Exploracion Del Territorio de Davao (Filipinas)*. Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de Fontanet, 1891.


Shankland, B.F. “Mr. Cummings’ Liberal Donation.” The Republican. May 9, 1906.


———. Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory. Davao City, Philippines: Published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office for the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs, 2005.


### b. Theses and Dissertations


