

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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Philippine Studies vol. 12, no. 2 (1964): 288–295

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Texts & Documents

The Abandonment of Tamontaka Reduction (1898-1899)

NICHOLAS P. CUSHNER

A unique feature of nineteenth-century Jesuit missionary work in the Philippines was the establishment of a Paraguayan-style reduction in Tamontaka, in the heart of the Mohammedan region of Mindanao.¹ The missionaries had seen the almost complete impossibility of converting the Philippine Mohammedans, or Moros as they were called, by conventional means, so they attempted to set up a Christian "island" in the region with the hope that good example and a higher standard of living would attract both the neighboring Tiruray peoples and eventually the Moros themselves. The nucleus of this community was to be formed by ransomed Moro children, purchased in the slave-markets of Zamboanga and from Chinese middlemen.²

¹ The origins and function of the reduction are studied in: Frank Madigan and Nicholas P. Cushner, "Tamontaka: A Sociological experiment," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* XIX, 4 (December 1958) 322-36; "Tamontaka Reduction: A Community Approach to Mission Work," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionwissenschaft* XVII, 2 (1961) 81-94; Nicholas P. Cushner, "Jesuit Reductions in the Philippines and Paraguay" *Woodstock Letters*, (July 1963) 223-32. See also Pablo Pastells, S.J., *Misión de la Compañía de Jesús de Filipinas en el siglo XIX*, III (Barcelona 1917), *passim*.

² Many of the children were bought from Chinese who had purchased them from Moros with the intention of reselling them to the Jesuits in Tamontaka. The first fifty or sixty ransomed children were between the ages of three and thirteen. Later, Moros and Tirurays of all ages drifted into the establishment. Some were sent by the Spanish government in Zamboanga and Cotabato. A number of older boys were sent who had been taken prisoner by the Spanish navy

The plan was looked upon favorably in Manila and the government advanced 4500 pesos for the project. Subscriptions were also received in Manila which exceeded 12,000 pesos. But when the *junta* overseeing the project in Manila learned that the children were to remain in the Río Grande mission, as Tamontaka was called, it was ordered that the money be spent in ransoming children in other parts of the islands. The junta also chafed at the ransom price of each child, which often reached as high as thirty pesos. Complaints were voiced to the effect that the Jesuits had begun the project as a source of cheap labor.

It would seem that the idea originated with the Spanish army commander of the fifth district of Mindanao, Luís Golfín. He had under his command soldiers, deportees and *presidarios*, all Christian. Golfín had the foresight to conceive a plan of educating young girls to Christianity who would one day marry the Christian soldiers, thus forming the nucleus of a Christian colony in Mindanao. The Jesuit contribution was to suggest that young boys be ransomed as well, and to put the project on a much grander scale.³

The original sum of 4500 pesos sufficed only for the ransom of about a hundred children, so a piece of land was bought whose produce kept the work going. Later one hundred pesos a month was assigned to Tamontaka by the government. With this the Jesuits were expected to run two schools, one for the boys and the other for the girls, a central house and chapel, plus a dispensary for Moros and Tirurays; no mean feat.

From its foundation to 1879, 160 children were ransomed and raised on the reduction. After marriage, which was often prearranged by the Fathers and Sisters (who arrived in 1876 to care for the girls), the couples were given a plot of land, a carabao, and in their first year of marriage, food and clothing up to the first harvest.⁴ By 1879,

in the seemingly interminable clashes between Spanish and Moros. The planting of a ready-made Christian community was later suggested by Fr. Juan Ricart as a possible means of converting the whole of Mindanao. Ricart suggested that willing Christians be brought from the over-populated and poorer islands, e.g., Bohol and Siquijor, and resettled in the northern coastal towns of Mindanao. See the "Proyecto de colonización en Mindanao propuesto por el P. Superior de la Compañía de Jesús, Manila, 30 de agosto de 1893", Archivo Histórico de la Provincia Tarraconense S.I., San Cugat del Vallés, Barcelona (hereinafter cited as *Tarrac.*) *Documentos Manuscritos de la Historia de Filipinas* CXIV (1890-1900), 603-609v.

³ "Historia de la Misión del Río Grande de Mindanao," pp. 116-18, *Tarrac.*, E-II-b-70.

⁴ "Memorial sobre la Casa-Misión de los PP. de la Compañía de Jesús establecida en Tamontaca. Campamento de Cotta-Bato, 20 de mayo de 1879", *Ibid.*, 8v.

twenty-six couples were living on the reduction as *libertos*, as they were called.⁵

The Jesuits were well satisfied with the results of their project which gave every promise of eventual if not immediate success. The historian of the reduction wrote with measured confidence:

In the children is placed all hope for the future, perhaps because there is no better way to civilize an island little by little... Who knows if the Lord may want to make use of these poor children to provide an impetus to the whole mission of the Río Grandel... Everything depends on how the children are brought up. For if now, in spite of the short time we have had them, they have learned something of our customs and have acquired good habits of work (they stumble through our language, recite their Christian prayers, know the alphabet and some songs, and there are some who read and are able to serve Mass), what will be the results of our work after they have spent several years in the mission.⁶

If the Fathers were always satisfied with the children, the reverse was not always the case. Although the records show that the children married within the reduction, there were a number who found life in Tamontaka too restricted, and so escaped. The biggest recorded "break" occurred on the night of June 20-21, 1878, when fourteen youths scurried off into the woods, never to be heard of again. In several cases the escapees returned voluntarily, as happened with one Dionisio, a Bagobo from Davao. When Dionisio was eleven years old, in October of 1883, he was admitted to Tamontaka and soon after baptized. But six years later, on February 10, 1889, he escaped with Tomás Cervera. The two were picked up by Moros and brought to the governor who after holding them in custody for a few days, released them. Dionisio then asked to be re-admitted to Tamontaka. He was at first refused but his insistence persuaded the Fathers of his sincerity. The record book notes that Dionisio married María Estrada on February 28, 1892.⁷

The relative success of the reduction has been examined elsewhere.⁸ But certainly in the minds of the Jesuits who labored in Mindanao it was the best and only workable method of bringing the Moros within the Christian pale.⁹ The missionaries frequently criti-

⁵ "Origen y progresos del orfanotrofio de Tamontaca y registro de libertos..." *Tarrac.*, E-II-b-72, records over 566 entrants from September, 1872, to 1893. Why the records stop at 1893 I do not know. Certainly there were entrants up to 1898.

⁶ "Historia de la Misión," p. 120.

⁷ "Origen y progresos," nú. 323.

⁸ Cf. Madigan and Cushner, "Tamontaka: A Sociological Experiment," 331-36.

⁹ The experiment in Tamontaka was the topic of a number of letters written by Jesuit missionaries in Mindanao. They are all in the collection, *Cartas de los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús de la Misión de Filipinas*, 10 vols., Manila, 1877-1895. I have found the following of special help in understanding the project and the atti-

cized the Spanish government for lack of any organized method in colonizing Mindanao. With the reduction of Tamontaka they perhaps hoped to provide an example of how the island should be converted, and its material resources utilized. Fr. Guillermo Bennásar's words are almost prophetic:

Your Reverence knows that I never harbored any illusions about this mission which I have always said, and still say, will cost much sweat, time and money. But I also believe that the Río Grande is in time destined to be one of the most important areas, not only of Mindanao, but of the whole Philippines.¹⁰

It was when the reduction of Tamontaka was beginning to bear fruit that it was abandoned. With the American invasion of Manila and the occupation of the Philippines in 1899, the Jesuits were dispersed and the children scattered, never to unite again. It is with the abandonment of the reduction that the following text is concerned. Taken from the diary of the house, titled *Diario de la Casa-misión de Tamontaca, Año 1894* [*a* 1899, added by a later hand], it tells the story of those final days of sadness and confusion. The author was probably Fr. Pablo Mayoral, S.J., who was the official chronicler of the residence. I had not been able to use this diary in previous studies on Tamontaka. The diary, in a bound notebook measuring 15 by 21 cms., is found in the Jesuit Archivo de la Provincia Tarraconense, San Cugat del Vallés, Barcelona, Spain.¹¹ It is reproduced here in translation with the kind permission of Fr. Francisco Solá, S.J., Archivist.

SELECTED ENTRIES FROM THE "DIARIO DE LA CASA-MISIÓN DE TAMONTACA, 1898-1899"

[May, 1898]

12. The mailboat did not come from Manila because it seems that the departure from there was suspended for fear of the ship being captured by a warship of the United States.

tudes of the missionaries towards it. "Luis Tello to the Superior de la Misión," Tamontaca, 6 de enero de 1877," I, 72-75; "Antonio Gairolas al P. José Villanova, Polloc, 22 de enero de 1878," II, 88-89; "Jacinto Juanmartí al P. Pedro Bertran, Tamontaca, 17 de abril de 1878, II, 111-113; "Juan Heras al P. Provincial, Manila, 10 de diciembre de 1878, II, 226-29;" Algunas reflexiones sobre el 5° Distrito de Mindanao, llamado del Centro," publicadas el año pasado en la *Oceanía*. *Ibid.* 230-247. Various letters of Fr. Juanmartí to the superior of the mission, VII 36-73; IX, 85-89. The collection has been examined by Frank Lynch, S.J., "The Jesuit Letters of Mindanao as a Source of Anthropological Data," *Philippine Studies*, July (1956). 247-272.

¹⁰ *Cartas*, VII, 73-74.

¹¹ See Appendix for a list of the material on Tamontaka found in this Archive.

13. Fr. Superior goes to Cotabato to get news about the situation and he receives orders from the governor to keep an eye on the entrance of the Pulangi River.¹²

14. Frs. Superior and Mayoral and Bro. Pérez go to the mouth of the Pulangi and tell the Moros there to keep a close watch and let them know if anything occurs.

16. Fr. Superior goes to Cotabato and he brings news that hostilities have broken out with the United States.¹³

18. Yesterday we had news that the mailboat was sighted. This morning Fr. Superior went to Cotabato where he found anchored the gunboat *Elcano*. It brought official notice that the cruisers *Austria* and *Cristina* were damaged in a naval battle with American cruisers in Manila Bay.¹⁴

20. Some telegrams arrived today, received in Iloilo from Manila, which say that our armada engaged in a naval battle with the American fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. Our ships sank three enemy cruisers; off Matanzas an enemy cruiser bombarded the town but was driven off by our heavy return fire; Cavite was destroyed by the enemy and Manila was shelled, our ships suffering heavily. Bro. Puigpelat went this afternoon to bring the money and Mass wine which is there. At 9:28 we had a strong earth tremor which lasted fifty seconds.¹⁵

[On May 25 the Fathers in Tamontaca received word of a large Spanish expedition which was to embark from Cayo

¹² The superior was Salvador Viñas, S.J. He was superior of the greater Tamontaka residence, which included Tamontaka, Cotabato and Polloc. The Pulangi River flows into the Moro Gulf on the western shore of Mindanao.

¹³ War broke out in April, 1898. On April 18, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution declaring that the people of Cuba must be free and independent, and that Spanish military and naval forces must withdraw from the Islands.

¹⁴ On May 1, in the Battle of Cavite, Dewey's seven warships destroyed a Spanish squadron of six vessels under Admiral Montojo. The *Cristina* and *Juan Austria* were among them.

¹⁵ The Gulf of Mexico engagement never took place. It must have been either a false rumor or a deliberate attempt to bolster Spanish morale in the Philippines.

Hueso and march overland to New York. On June 6 they learned of the American invasion of Cuba and a month later the sad news that Manila had fallen was known.¹⁶ On September 20 they learned that Cuba had also fallen to the Yankees.¹⁷ The Captain of the Tercios of Davao informed the Fathers on September 27 that their college in Manila was not damaged, and he added that the "Yankis son muy sucios y beodos," dirty and drunken.]

[January, 1899]

4. At four in the afternoon the gunboat *Panay* arrived in Cotabato from Zamboanga. It brought the bad news that the Yankees had demanded the Philippines and Spain had acceded to their demands.¹⁸ So last month our troops abandoned Iloilo, Cebu, Iligan and Paragua, and within a month Cotabato and Zamboanga have to be evacuated as well.

9. With the news that the Spaniards will evacuate Cotabato many Moros begin to appear here. Dato Mamalancás comes to see us to find out with whom we are going to leave our possessions.

10. Fr. Superior goes to and returns from Cotabato. Dato Ara comes in the afternoon to get news about what we are going to do. He offers to guard the cattle for us and whatever we wish him to keep an eye on. Twenty-five carabaos are sold at a good price and at night they steal twenty head from us.

11. All day long bands of Moros along with several minor datos were walking around here; some to buy carabao and see what was going on, others to buy things and take the children from the orphanage. Almost all the carabao from the herd on the other side of the river have been sold. Several head were shipped here.

¹⁶ Manila fell on 13 August 1898.

¹⁷ After the destruction of the Spanish fleet a capitulation was signed in Santiago de Cuba on July 15, 1898.

¹⁸ On December 10, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed which ceded the Philippines to the United States.

12. The sale of carabao from our farm continues. Today thirty head were sold. Last night several Moros were seen and some were chased who had come to steal the carabao. In the afternoon Dato Ara came again to see us. Fr. Superior, who had returned from Cotabato in the morning, left for there again to meet the mailboat, the *Rosario*, which was bringing Fr. Bitrián. He [Bitrián] told us to say that we would not leave here even though the Spaniards left Cotabato, news which gladdened all, Jesuits as well as the townsfolk of Tamontaka.¹⁹

13. Last night the Moros destroyed the coco plantation of Dina. This morning and yesterday evening they cut part of the sugar cane on the other side and carried off a good number of coconuts. The brothers went out after them but all the robbers escaped. It should be said that the Moros of Ara are acting shamefully. In the afternoon Fr. Bitrián, accompanied by Fr. Superior, came to Tamontaka, and he was well received by all. He told us many things about his trip to Manila and about his business there. He also informed us about the current situation.

14. Fr. Bitrián was here all day, speaking with everyone and getting our opinions on whether we should stay in the mission or abandon it. Although up to now all have been firm in not wanting to leave, nevertheless, the impudence and effrontery of the Moros in invading the mission and stealing the eyes right out of our heads convince Fr. Bitrián that all should leave.

15. Frs. Bitrián and Viñas leave for Cotabato. Since it is Sunday there is not the movement of Moros noticed on previous days. Some of the Moros and Christians come to ask for the children of the establishment, which request is generally denied. At about eight at night Fr. Superior arrives with news that very early on the day following, the Madres will leave for Cotabato to embark on the *Castellano* with the young girls who will go to Zamboanga. Then at night the Fathers go to tell them the news.

¹⁹ Fr. Victor Bitrián was the superior in Zamboanga.

16. After hearing Holy Mass the seven Madres del Beaterio²⁰ leave for Cotabato along with thirty-seven young girls and accompanied by Fr. Superior. They are to embark in the *Castellano*. Frs. Bitrián, Ferrer and Bro. Jaume, who abandoned the mission of Polloc the day before, left also. The *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* arrives in Cotabato and it was decided that the young boys should leave on it. At about eight at night thirty-two youngsters, accompanied by Fr. Mayoral and Bro. Serrano, left Tamontaka for Cotabato. Since it rained steadily almost the whole way they arrived at Cotabato at ten at night. When it was seen that the youngsters were leaving, the majority of townspeople of Tamontaka went to Cotabato by groups during the night in order to follow the Fathers.

17. Fr. Ramo and Bro. Serrano embark for Zamboanga accompanying our young boys. The *Churruca* arrives and our belongings are loaded on it. The Fathers from Tamontaka write that because of circumstances they must leave tonight and in fact Frs. Viñas and Bennásar, and Bros. Pérez, Puigpelat, Sanromá and Llull left for Cotabato at 8 o'clock. On the following day, after having loaded aboard the *Churruca* almost all our belongings and many people from Tamontaka, Bro. Pérez and Fr. Mayoral departed, leaving for the time being those missions where God had poured so much good and heavenly favor upon the Moro and Tiruray peoples, working by means of Ours for the thirty-seven years of our stay here. May God be praised!

APPENDIX

Material on Tamontaka in the Jesuit Archivo Histórico de la Provincia Tarraconense, San Cugat del Vallés, Barcelona.

1. *Infieles de Mindanao, Basilan y Joló*, 1901. 266 pp. (By various Jesuit authors.) E-2-a-3. A study of the social ways of the tribes of Mindanao, prepared for the Spanish exhibit of the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904.

²⁰ The Instituto de la Compañía de Beatas de la Virgen María, the first native congregation of nuns, founded in the Philippines in 1684, sent three sisters in May of 1876 to care for the girls in the establishment. Beatas continued working in Tamontaka until the dispersion of the reduction.

2. "Memoria sobre la Casa-Misión de los PP. de la Compañía de Jesús establecida en Tamontaca." Campamento de Cotta-bato. 20 de marzo de 1879. 10 ff. (no catalogue number)

3. "Misión de Tamontaca. Copia en borrador de las comunicaciones oficiales salientes. 22 julio a 27 abril 1879." (In bound notebook) E-II-b-69.

4. "Historia de la Misión del Río Grande de Mindanao." (up to 1879, in bound notebook). E-II-b-70.

5. "Diario de la Casa-Misión de Tamontaca. Año 1894. ["a 1899," added by a later hand]. E-II-b-71.

6. "Origen y progresos del orfanotrofio de Tamontaca y registro de libertos de uno y otro sexo que en él ingresaron desde el 9 de setiembre de 1872 hasta el 10 de octubre de 1893." 108 ff. E-II-b-72.

7. "Registro de los moros que han venido a la misión de Tamontaca desde fines del año 1891." (from November 1891 to June, 1898) E-II-b-73.

Leonard Wood As Governor General: A Calendar of Selected Correspondence, Part 2

MICHAEL ONORATO

In this second installment of my Calendar I list pertinent material in the personal correspondence of J. Ralston Hayden and the papers of Katherine Mayo. The numbering of the footnotes is consecutive to that of Part 1, to facilitate cross-reference.

It is unfortunate that this portion of the Harrison papers must suffer from the lack of the former governor-general's replies. The letters in his files are evidence of Harrison's deep interest in Filipino matters. In fact, many of the letters are directed toward answering the questions he raised concerning Quezon, Wood, or Filipino matters in general. The correspondence from Filipinos concerning Wood and Quezon is very interesting.

The J. Ralston Hayden papers are at the University of Michigan. They are valuable for the Philippine scholar whose