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## Camarines Towns Under Siege

FRANCISCO MALLARI, S. J.

In the "Moro Wars" of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, there were bloody encounters between Spain and the Moro sultanates of the southern Philippines. At various periods, to stop or strike back at Spanish encroachments, fleets of Sulu and Magindanao raiders attacked shipyards where Spanish naval vessels were constructed. They took workers, priests and Spaniards as captives for ransom.<sup>1</sup> In the 1700s when the government closed down shipyards in Bicol for unknown reasons, pirates shifted their attacks to towns and settlements in Camarines and Albay, and killed or carried their inhabitants into slavery.<sup>2</sup>

Moro pirates in 1759 invaded the district of India (now Vinzons), reported Don Francisco X. Estorgo Gallegos, a mining concessionaire in Paracale. They took captives for the slave markets. But to save on sparse provisions, escaped captives said, the pirates daily put to death the "useless" (about three hundred), the aged and the children, sparing only the women.<sup>3</sup> From 1700 well into the 1800s, the number of villages and towns plundered and razed and Bicolano men, women and children killed or captured increased. Fray Bernardo de la Concepcion, then Bishop of Nueva Caceres, estimated in 1817 that 1,500, mostly boys and girls, were captured from Albay, Camarines and Tayabas

1. PNA Mindanao/Sulu 1769-1898, folio 1. Felix de Huerta, *Estado geografico, topografico, estadistico, historico, religioso de la santa y apostolica provincia de San Gregorio Magno* (Binondo 1865), p. 589. Emilio Bernaldez y Fernandez de Folgueras, *Reseña historica de la guerra al sur de Filipinas* (Madrid 1857), p. 60. BR 19: 204-05; 22: 204-05.

2. PNA Memoria de Albay, fol. 35b. MN Ms. 2237, doc. 1, fols. 83-83v. PNL MF fols. 190-214.

3. AGI Filipinas 490.

(now Quezon province).<sup>4</sup> This was the toll in the Bicol region of the "Fishers of Men," the Balangingi, and other slave raiders.<sup>5</sup>

The pirates' tricks were as diverse as they were difficult to counter-act. Sworn statements of escaped captives narrated how the pirates frequently caught their victims off guard.<sup>6</sup> They sometimes came with a flag of truce, purportedly to negotiate for the ransom of their captives. But then and there, they would seize the negotiating party and the ransom and flee. For lack of arms and sufficient forces, a majority of the towns had to put up with that high-handed arbitrariness to avoid being devastated, if they attempted to turn them away.<sup>7</sup>

The pirates concealed their ships, the *panco* and the *joanga*, in nearby islets or coves, then set out on small *barotos* or *salisipan* for inshore scouring. At night, they paddled among unsuspecting torchlight fishers and caught them effortlessly like a school of fish. At early dawn while the others lay flat the hull, and one or two dressed like Christians paddled, they easily captured unwary fishermen at their fish corrals and seized light vessels of traders and devotees going to or coming from fiestas. They surprised individuals casting nets, picking shellfish, gathering seaweeds, making salt or cutting mangrove.<sup>8</sup> Captives so increased in the coastal towns and settlements that Albay's *alcalde mayor* begged for help on how to minimize their number.<sup>9</sup> But there seemed to have been no immediate help.

Pirate prows continued to appear with regularity along coastal towns and settlements when the southwest monsoon blew. No community was safe no matter how far from raiding stations. In the face of mounting raids of the Magindanao, Iranun, Balangingi and Camucones pirates, the government was practically helpless. The few navy ships afloat were either rotting or in need of careening, while the treasury had empty coffers. Letters from ranking civil and church officials reported the miserable state of the towns on account of the

4. AGI Filipinas 490. AGI Ultramar 684 cited by James Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), p. 180.

5. MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40v. AFIO 92/28, fol. 31. AGI Filipinas 160, 490, 611, 681. PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fol. 3; 1785-1837, fol. 14. PNA Mindanao/Sulu 1770-1897, fols. 56-56b. PNA EP-CN 1832-1898, fol. 3. Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, p. 180.

6. PNA Piratas 2, fols. 3b, 6-6b, 9.

7. Juan de Concepcion, *Historia general de Filipinas* (Manila, 1788-92) 13: 18-20. PNL MF fol. 197.

8. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA Piratas 2, fols. 7, 48; Piratas 3, fols. 1, 6; Warren, *The Sulu Zone*, pp. 180, 239; PNA EP-A 1799-1894, fols. 120-120v; PNA EP-T 1827-1896, fol. 255.

9. PNA Piratas 2, fols. 7-8b.

frequent raids, and the utter abandonment of Camarines and Albay with not a cent for defense from the Finance Ministry.<sup>10</sup>

#### CONTRIVANCES AND SENTINELS

To save themselves from almost irresistible attacks, the people either fled to the mountains or sought protection inside the church where they defended themselves. Others relied on their resourcefulness and fashioned ingenious devices. To hide their dwelling places and make entrance into their village difficult, they planted thorny bamboo around the village so thickly that humans or animals could not pass through. In Tinambac, along footpaths they scattered "star-thistles" or bamboo thorns which were injurious to unshod feet. In Ragay, they surrounded the town with tall, sturdy stakes and posted *bantayes* or sentinels at the mouth of the river, the usual entrance of Moro marauders. When aid from human agencies seemed impossible to come by, they called on heaven. Histories of Camarines and Albay towns are rich in stories of prodigious interventions of patron saints mysteriously seen either battling the Moros or thwarting their piratical intent.<sup>11</sup>

In 1753, for better protection, the government ordered coastal communities to put up signals or lookouts.<sup>12</sup> Long before the invention of wireless communications, the Bicolanos had improvised clever devices. As in Albay, the Camarines Bicolanos posted *bantayes* in watchtowers. At the sight of approaching pirates, they struck a hollowed tree trunk or wooden gong (named *balalong*, *batong*, *talotong* in different places) which produced a far-reaching, deep-toned sound. Or they blew the *bodiong* which was either a hand-crafted carabao horn or a large conch. At night they lighted bonfires on heights or desolate edges of the ocean shore to warn the *poblacion* or get relays of runners to dash to nearby settlements or towns with the news of sightings or landing of pirates.<sup>13</sup>

In most cases, they rang the church bells as a signal. Upon hearing them, the old and the helpless knew where to go, and the able-bodied

10. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-A 1799-1864, fols. 114-114b, 116-117b; Concepcion, *Historia general*, 12: 238-39; AGI Filipinas 490; Domingo Abella, *Bikol Annals* (Manila, 1954), p. 106.

11. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNL HDP Camarines Norte, No. 25, pp. 1, 3; HDP Masbate, No. 58, pp. 1, 2; No. 59, pp. 1-2, 66-67, 80, 81; No. 60, p. 48. HDP Albay II-3, pp. 147-78, 476, 497, 536; HDP Camarines Sur, I-26, p. 10; IV-29, pp. 3, 15, 67, 80; II-27, p. 67.

12. AGI Filipinas 464.

13. PNL HDP Camarines Sur, I-26, p. 2.

prepared to defend their homes and properties. Some town histories narrate how Moro pirates vented their wrath on church bells by tearing them from the belfry and dumping them into a river or the sea.<sup>14</sup> But there were towns where the inhabitants, not the Moros, either threw their church bells into the river or hid them in the amusing belief that their sound attracted the Moros.<sup>15</sup>

To strengthen their defenses, the *alcalde mayor* ordered the organization of provincial *bantayes*,<sup>16</sup> wrote Fr. Jose Diaz del Rosario, parish priest of Baao, Camarines, in 1815.<sup>17</sup> Each town assigned seven to eight inhabitants to the job. They were on guard at the center of the poblacion, busy roads and entrances and exit points of towns and villages. They manned sentry posts on main streets accompanied by five *principales* at night, checking persons and their travel permits.<sup>18</sup> They carried lights and a bell which they rang in emergencies or in relaying the "all's well" call from one *bantay* to the other at regular time intervals.<sup>19</sup> However, on account of the inconveniences of a *bantay's* work, Bicolanos as a rule bought their way out of it when their turn to serve came up.

A solicitous *ad interim* governor and captain general by the name of Mariano Fernandez de Folgueras took office. At his second *ad interim* term (1816–22), he was confronted by the necessity of aiding the afflicted towns of Camarines without resorting to expensive armed expeditions. For his initial move, Folgueras issued a decree, on 18 September 1818, that was promptly sent to Iñigo Gonzalez Azaola, the *Alcalde Mayor* of Camarines. He called for the regulation of firearms and other weapons, creation of a corps of local militia, organization of a calvary squadron and erection of defensive structures, like *castillos* and *baluarte*.<sup>20</sup>

14. PNL HDP Camarines Norte, Daet, p. 4. HDP Masbate, No. 59, p. 54; No. 60, p. 68. HDP Albay III–4, p. 44; IV–5, pp. 260–61.

15. PNL HDP Camarines Norte, No. 25, pp. 1, 4. HDP Camarines Sur, I–26, pp. 10–11. HDP Albay, IV–5, pp. 260–61, 430.

16. Buzeta defines their composition and duties. Manuel Buzeta & Felipe Bravo, *Diccionario geografico, estadistico, historico de las islas Filipinas* (Madrid, 1850–51) I: 106.

17. PNA EP-CS 1799–1820, fol. 348.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797–1855, fol. 154. Folgueras very probably never set foot in Camarines otherwise he would not have advised the formation of cavalry. Antonio de Siguenza, a military officer who had seen much of Bicol, did not see any suitable place in southern Camarines for cavalry or artillery, since the plains, except in the dry season, were flooded in preparation for rice planting. AFIO D–10/22, fols. 438–39.

The decree was received under auspicious omens and euphoric sentiments. Less than a month after the decree, the Albay *armadilla* commanded by Pedro Estevan, the region's hero, scored morale-boosting victories, on 26 October 1818, off Caramoan peninsula, at Tabgon and Pitogo bays.<sup>21</sup> These Moro defeats which were not great in comparison to other defeats inflicted by commanders, like Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, were defeats no less, and boded well for the Camarines Bicolanos. They realized, among other things, that on equal grounds, Bicolanos could beat the Moros. In this propitious light, Azaola acted on Governor Folgueras's decree. He issued, on 3 November 1818, his own circular to the oft raided towns along the *contracosta* or northern coast, like Capalonga, Mambulao (now Jose Panganiban), Paracale, Labo (an inland town), Indan, Talisay and Daet, and to the bayshore towns of Libmanan, Calabanga and Quipayo. He enclosed with each circular a copy of Folgueras's decree, asking each maritime town under the greatest danger of being attacked by Moros to prepare as soon as possible, the appropriate means and necessary arms it needed to combat invasions.<sup>22</sup> Considering the poor communications, the responses were relatively fast. Each town addressed by Azaola held its *junta* composed of past *capitanes*, *cabezas de barangay* and other leading citizens. Each *junta* drew up a report certified by the parish priest.

#### ARMS AND MUNITIONS

The reports brought to light the weaknesses of the towns. It was sad to see the helplessness of each town to come to the aid of a neighboring town under siege. Each town was as badly in need of arms as the other. Their petitions for weapons and other forms of aid were couched in the most supplicatory terms, beseeching Alcalde Azaola's intercession with the Manila government. They asked for firearms with the stated purpose of defending the Faith and their inhabitants, as well as their prosperity and tranquility.

Daet sent the most concise report with a list of names of a cavalry and infantry company it had either formed or intended to form.<sup>23</sup> It asked for six cannons. Talisay, which had never received any armaments before, sought munitions and guns of various calibers and

21. See PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 297, 300-300b, 301, 308, 312, 313-314, 334-334b, 335, 340b, 350. AGI Filipinas 687.

22. PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 108, 110, 129.

23. All information in this paragraph and the next was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 111, 117, 118, 121, 123, 123b, 126, 128b, 134, 138.

twenty-four auxiliary muskets, all of which would be in the care of 100 militiamen, well instructed in handling them and always combat ready.

Indan's report which was formulated out of a tragic experience only some four months earlier was the longest. A raiding fleet of about twenty-five *pancos* had descended on this lonely *pueblo* and overcome its courageous inhabitants who were pitifully armed with only some arrows and three or four muskets. The raiders devastated the farmlands, killed, wounded and captured some townspeople and reduced the poblacion to ashes. Were it not for constant captivities, this town would have had a large number of tributes, for unlike the mining towns, it was progressive. It had a prosperous cattle industry and abundance of big game.<sup>24</sup> Its junta asked for 10 cannons, 41 muskets with munitions and 100 bladed weapons to arm militiamen and 50 substitutes who would be trained but without privileges unless called into active duty.<sup>25</sup>

The mining town of Paracale petitioned for six cannons and muskets for soldiers.<sup>26</sup> Its neighbor, Mambulao, was in a worse situation. Because of its weak defense, it had been pillaged repeatedly without resistance. Some of its inhabitants worked in the mines, while others stayed on the opposite islet and engaged in gathering *balatan*. But at the start of the season of Moro raids, they moved to Paracale, a good four hours by land, for safety.<sup>27</sup>

As far back as 1785, the then alcalde mayor of Camarines himself, Carlos Connely, had notified Governor Jose Basco of the utter defenselessness of this town. He called it the "emporium" not only of the province but also of Luzon, especially when its gold mines were at peak prosperity. Connely reported that about two or three joangas of Moro pirates, aware of the town's defenseless state, set it up for a night assault. Fortunately, the presence in port of an armed galley from Paracale discouraged them. Shaken, nonetheless, by the aborted raid, the inhabitants took stock of their armaments. To their alarm and disbelief, such an important mining town did not possess as much as three pounds of gunpowder and no more than one gunboat's two-pounder cannon and another smaller one mounted on a small baluarte on a hill.

24. AFIO D-10/22, fols. 93-100.

25. MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40v. PNA EP-CS 1797-1855, fol. 153; EP-CS 1797-1852, fol. 127.

26. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fol. 129; EP-CS 1785-1837, fol. 2. The effects of the raids in Paracale and other places are mentioned in AGI Filipinas 490.

27. AFIO 92/32, fol. 5.

To forestall any future disaster from a surprise raid, Connely tried to rouse the inhabitants' patriotic spirit to raise funds by voluntary contribution for the purchase of two cannons, which, with a quintal of powder and munitions, would sufficiently fortify the town's baluarte. If the contributions were small, Connely asked the governor's permission to allow them to charge a tax of *reales* for every match at the cockpit on feast days till they accumulated the necessary amount.<sup>28</sup> It seems that the alcalde's unusual interest in Mambulao's security was not a case of political patronage or showmanship. A few days after his report to Basco, the Bishop of Nueva Caceres, Juan Antonio de Orbigo, confirmed the veracity of Connely's report.<sup>29</sup>

It is not known whether or not Connely's efforts bore fruit, but in 1818 the security demands had dwarfed the town's existing defensive capabilities. To bolster its "weak defense," its junta petitioned for six bronze cannons and fifty muskets with munitions.<sup>30</sup>

The needs of Capalonga, a frontier town, were just as acute. In comparison to others, it was the most exposed to enemy attacks and very embattled due to its remoteness from instant help. In 1810 it had suffered a unique disaster. Its palisade, baluartes and townproper were levelled in an hour, not by a swarming horde of pirates but by a very destructive fire that started from the church. Its worst loss was the four cannons and four muskets on which the whole defense of the town depended. The inhabitants barely saved two cannons and some shot.

The stricken inhabitants presented the melted metal of their artillery pieces to their Alcalde Mayor, Francisco Xavier de Velasco, from whom they asked replacements. The alcalde promised to intercede with Manila, but nothing positive happened. Forced by necessity, the people fabricated wooden cannons to be employed as deceptive devices during battles. In three raids after the conflagration, the ruse stood the defenders in good stead. They employed the simple expediency of setting up the two real cannons in the castillo under attack, and the wooden ones in the unthreatened castillos.

From these combats, the Capalongans learned useful lessons. To their consternation, they saw their two-pounder shots bouncing off a Moro assault device called *tortuga*. It was a wheeled contrivance that shielded a number of attackers as they inched alongside a baluarte to attack it or hurl flaming torches on the houses inside the palisade. In

28. PNA EP-CS 1785-1837, fol. 2b.

29. *Ibid.*, 4.

30. All information in this paragraph and the subsequent ones was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 134, 136-137, 138-139.



such a critical situation, to destroy the tortuga, the defenders would sally out of their fortification and engage the enemy in hand to hand combat with bladed weapons. It was a dangerous and costly venture. Failure resulted in the easy capture of their fortification. In the enemy assault in 1818, an escaped captive said the Moros left word that in the coming year, they would surely overrun the palisade, as they would return in greater force with better equipment.

The Capalongans related the above incidents to bring out the gravity of the threat, aggravated by their deficiency in large caliber cannon. They asked for six heavy caliber guns, twelve muskets with a hundred rounds, cannister shot for each cannon and powder for a long siege. Otherwise, as in past battles, to save powder and shot for better occasions in case of a protracted siege, they held their fire though damage to the enemy was certain. The report earnestly begged the alcalde to have pity on his unhappy subjects, for the loss of Capalonga would do serious public harm. It was a transit point for dispatches, a haven for passenger ships harassed by Moro pirates or menaced by rough weather. If given the arms solicited, the Capalongans promised to do battle against all His Majesty's adversaries.

Very intent on attaining peace and progress for its own inhabitants through the termination of Moro raids, like other towns, Labo reported the inadequacy of its defense. It was an inland town, four hours away from Indan, with a buffer zone provided by the neighboring towns of Indan, Daet and Talisay, yet subjected to annual incursions and continuous capture of its settlers. It begged for eleven artillery pieces, fifty sabers and twelve muskets. These would be under the charge of twenty-four men who, together with the personnel of the castillos, would form the fifty-member militia corps armed with bladed weapons.

The littoral towns of San Miguel bay also communicated their pressing needs. Libmanan was one of them. It was the most abandoned, perhaps because of the inaccessibility of the *sitios* and settlements that needed succor. In the bay area, it was also the most exposed to piratical attacks. Its defenses were weak and its population was dispersed in coconut plantations where they were fermenting coconut wine and would not move even though the Moros were in sight.<sup>31</sup>

Citing testimonies of recent escaped captives about the threat of pirate raids, Pedro de San Pablo Alcantara, the town head, earnestly petitioned for eight cannons, six muskets and sufficient gunpowder.<sup>32</sup>

31. PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fol. 146b.

32. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 111-112.

Libmanan's insecurity, he pointed out, arose from the town's vulnerability from landings on the northern coast and nearby Cabusao, and on the southern coast between Ragay and Pasacao through which the Moros in the past had invaded that town. Conscientious *alcaldes mayores* in the past who were painfully aware of these vulnerable openings had tried to plug them with available resources however meager. There was Alcalde Jacinto Rodriguez Morales who provided for the purchase of materials for the construction of a baluarte in Pasacao. He also issued rations to the bantayes posted in Cabusao and sent auxiliaries to other towns to strengthen local defenses.<sup>33</sup> Their situation had become more critical with the reported sightings of 150 Moro raiding vessels in the northern seas.

The plight of the nearby town of Quipayo was no better. Its proximity to the sea, its lack of any fortification and firearms due to its poverty, opened it to any hostile invasion. Its *interim gobernadorcillo*, Mariano San Martin, therefore, hailed the appropriateness and usefulness of Azaola's order. He resolved to carry out the proposed formation of a body of foot infantry with muskets and mounted infantry with lances. Since the town could not afford muskets, San Martin beseeched Azaola to intercede with the governor to bequeath Quipayo with muskets and bladed weapons, including six cannons and munitions.<sup>34</sup>

#### DEFENSIVE BULWARKS AND WATCHTOWERS

In their clamor for arms and munitions, the towns also briefly stated their plans to improve their defensive capability. A cursory consideration of their plans reveals the century's predominant military concept of static defense, which was to hole up in a fortified position and wait for and ward off enemy attacks. They translated their concept into an armed baluarte. Like their neighbors, the Albayenos, the Camarines Bicolanos also constructed castillos.

For its security, Daet relied much on castillos. In addition to its two extant ones, its junta planned to erect another at the sandbar of Bactas, the usual landing place of marauding Moros.<sup>35</sup> The cannons Daet solicited were intended to be mounted in these castillos. Apparently these castillos in the north were unlike those in southern Camarines and Albay which were described as structures of "four badly fastened posts supporting a straw roofing," no better than a fragile "dovecote"

33. AGI Filipinas 790.

34. PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 108-108b.

35. Ibid., 121.

which the Moros effortlessly razed by shooting a flaming arrow on to its roof.<sup>36</sup> In other words, they were unfortified, in contrast to the castillos in northern towns.

In consideration of its terrain, the town of Talisay decided not to form any corps of foot and mounted soldiers which the Governor had suggested.<sup>37</sup> Though the town nestled on a plain, the junta thought that its forests, mangrove swamps and fissures in summer months, especially near the coast, negated the effectiveness of infantry or cavalry. The junta opted to establish three baluartes on the beach of the sitios of Malup, Bujang and Mansuha. Though the low-lying sandbank prevented enemy vessels from coming in, the beach was an open, spacious landing area through which Moro pirates had entered the town only recently. These baluartes would be wooden, but of the most special timbers resistant to the bombardment of any gun. They could be reenforced with rocks or stones which were plentiful on the beach and much sought after for building construction.<sup>38</sup> Each baluarte would mount six cannons supported by four muskets provided with the necessary munitions and a complement of twenty-five persons furnished with bladed weapons under the command of a Castellan.

The covering artillery fire from these three forts would make Talisay impenetrable. But to erect less than three would be detrimental, not only to Talisay but also to Daet, Indan and San Vicente. To top its security measures, the townproper would be defended by six ordnance pieces, twelve muskets, all under the charge of twenty-five men armed with bladed weapons inside the palisade.

The junta of Indan acknowledged the superior advantage of a cavalry.<sup>39</sup> However, its woodlands stretching up to the beach and impassable mangrove swamps forced it to discard any hope of organizing a cavalry troop to the disappointment of the governor. It adopted the purely defensive policy of denying the enemy any beachhead, by the construction of four baluartes. Two would be built on the two sandbars fronting the town through which Moro pirates usually came in and proceeded as far as almost mid-town. Another would be erected at the sitio of Nacava for a double purpose: first, to oppose Moro landings at the bay through which they could reach the poblacion up

36. PNA EP-CS 1817-1898, fol. 33b. PNA EP-A 1800-1858, fol. 45.

37. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 123-123b.

38. AFIO D-10/22, fols. 83-84.

39. All information in this paragraph and the succeeding ones was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 126-127, 129-129b, 144b.

to San Vicente and second, to deprive the Moros of a haven in the island of Quinamanucan opposite the bay.

The last baluarte would be at the shore of Mantaian bay for the multiple purpose of defending the sandbar of the Bacal river, impeding an enemy landing at the bay and checking the pillage of large livestock. It would also protect the residential areas of the soil tillers and wood cutters, close the road leading to Labo and Dancalan in Paracale, and lastly, offer a safe refuge for vessels and traders in case of an encounter with the pirates.

These baluartes would be built of the most durable and finest wood to withstand the shock of the mounted ordnance. Each baluarte would be fortified with two cannons, four muskets, fifteen men armed with bladed weapons and commanded by a Castellan. The well-distributed firepower of these four forts would make Indan impregnable. The townproper's fortification, however, should be special, the plan stated. It should have two cannons, twenty-five muskets in the custody of thirty-six persons armed with bladed weapons, well trained in handling them, and organized into a body of minutemen.

Indan's defense plan was a wise response based on the inhabitants' tragic past experiences and their town's geographic location. Being the most productive in grain and other foodstuffs among the northern towns, Indan was the most raided, and its location made it a buffer for neighboring settlements and towns. In fact two former *alcaldes mayores* of the province, Jose Eguía and Antonio de Zuñiga, had recommended the construction of three stone towers to bolster the defenses.

To emphasize its seriousness and prevent any misconception of its plan, the junta of Paracale attached a sketch of its town. It indicated the ports and bays serving as havens for Moro pirates, and the three points proposed for the construction of three baluartes of stone and mortar, if Paracale were to be defended. So strategic were the three sites that the breaching of any one of them would lay bare the town, the farmlands and every other place to attack.

The baluartes would be armed with the artillery and the muskets sought for; the latter to be used by the soldiers, either to sally forth in support of the baluartes or to make a sortie. Every baluarte would be commanded by a respectable and reputable Castellan with twenty-five soldiers in his command enjoying privileges granted in the governor's decree. Like the other towns, the junta strongly pointed out that the lay of the land was a serious constraint in the organization of a mounted militia corps. But it would try to raise a body of fifty foot soldiers to be provided, hopefully, with government issued arms.

Fortifications were not novelties in Paracale. In 1756 Don Francisco Xavier Estorgo Gallegos erected the fort of *San Fernando de Malaguit* to protect Paracale and Mambulao from Moros.<sup>40</sup>

The neighboring mining town of Mambulao also felt the necessity of putting up a stronger defense. Its junta would mount the asked for guns on its unarmed castillos. It had no plan of constructing more fortifications. Probably the fort of San Fernando, erected by Gallegos at the coast of Mambulao and Paracale, was still in good shape, and also *Fort San Carlos* which he had built on a strategic hill.<sup>41</sup> Eight castillos stood in the poblacion and other strategic places, but they were no more than harmless structures of wood, stone and mortar incapacitated by lack of arms and munitions.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to its distant neighbor, Capalonga's junta sought permission to erect two castillos.<sup>43</sup> The town was situated between two rivers: Capalonga Viejo and Camagsaan, both half a mile from the poblacion and both landing points for attacks on the town or pillage in the farmlands. The two castillos, each to be armed with two cannons and two muskets, would be built on the two sandbanks of the rivers to curb incursions and allow the people to plant crops which were in great scarcity.

The people's inclination for castillos was understandable. Many very notable Moro datu had lost their lives before the pueblo's palisade, the junta reported, not to mention the five raiders captured in various encounters since the year 1810.

Similar to Capalonga, Labo had two entrances. They were the two very wide roads in the sitios of Avitan and Bagacay through which the Moros launched their attacks, carted away the grain, slaughtered livestock and destroyed plantations till they reached the poblacion. The junta deemed it necessary to build at every entrance point of these roads a castillo armed with four guns reenforced with thirteen men under a Castellan and constructed from the sturdiest timbers to absorb the shock of the mounted guns. Mired in its own concept of static defense, the junta discarded the suggestion of forming an infantry or cavalry corps, however advantageous. It considered the sierras and the woods hemming in the town as obstacles to an aggressive strategy.

40. AGI Filipinas 701, 723. PNL MF Ramo: Filipinas, fol. 197b.

41. AGI Filipinas 480, 723.

42. PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 134-134b.

43. All information in this paragraph and the succeeding ones was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 136-138b.

Towns in the bayshore area, like Libmanan, also derived some security from castillos.<sup>44</sup> After the Moros burned the castillo in the *visita* of Calampinay in Libmanan, a general council of principales led by Capitán Santiago Arambulo agreed to build a replacement in the same *visita* with a complement of four sentinels. They had previously erected one in the *visita* of Cobcobon by the sea, which took them three weeks of communal labor. The poblacion itself had castillos where the pirates were likely to pass when they disembarked.

There also used to be a baluarte manned by twelve sentinels in Cobcobon.<sup>45</sup> It contributed greatly to the quiet existence for the Libmanenses in their farms as well as in the *poblacion*. At the end of Gobernadorcillo Melchor de los Reyes's term, a clash of opinions between the people and their new local head, and the absence of raids, led to neglect and complacency. Against the people's wish, the weekly twelve to fifteen guards gave way to only two. The gobernadorcillo saw no necessity for a large number until the season of the south-westerlies. The customary repair job on the baluarte was stopped and the fort left to the care of the inhabitants of sitio Patiaya, under whose custody a castillo was destroyed by pirates. To the alarm of the Libmanenses, the gobernadorcillo stripped the baluarte of its cannons and brought them to the poblacion.

Then one dark night, a pack of pancos slid in on the sandy beach. A body of Moro warriors swarmed ashore. Still undetected, they crept to the baluarte and reduced it to smoldering embers. Departing from the general pattern of their attack, they sallied forth to the poblacion. Caught in their sleep, the drowsy residents could only take to flight. Only daybreak saved them from capture, reported Alcalde Francisco de Velasco, which is somewhat incomprehensible, since flight is best aided by darkness. With no resistance in their way, a part of the raiders proceeded to Sipocot, a nearby town. On the way to another *visita*, they killed one, wounded several and took captives from the sitios of Bigaan and Biguito, netting altogether ninety-two Christians.

In their report to their province head, the Libmanenses summed up in a few words their sufferings, "The many and grave harms done to our life, our families, our homes as well as our few possessions, farmlands and plantations are already intolerable . . ."<sup>46</sup> Some of them

44. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fols. 262b-263; 1797-1852, fol. 110b.

45. All information in this paragraph and the next one was taken from PNA EP-CS 1791-1891, fols. 193b-194; 1797-1855, fols. 104-105.

46. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fols. 104b-105.

did not have anything for their upkeep after the Moros had taken the *palay* from their fields, including cattle and carabaos. They could only fume in frustration at their gobernadorcillo who forbade them to pursue or attack the raiders outside the townproper. He made them stay within the graveyard of the church and wait for the raiders to enter the poblacion. Some, however, daringly slipped out and pursued the Moros. Catching up with some stragglers, they killed two with a campilan wrested from their quarry, then returned home and asked pardon from their gobernadorcillo. The Libmanenses were a brave lot who refused to be cowed by Moro pirates.<sup>47</sup>

After the raid, though the people were still shaken and mourning their losses, the gobernadorcillo ordered them to set up palisades around the poblacion.<sup>48</sup> The undesirable work was physically taxing and the recent disaster emotionally draining so that the populace appeared extremely worn out and resentful. Their misery intensified with the nagging anxieties about their captured relatives and ill-treatment at the hands of their town head. For some failure in their work, he ordered a number to be chastened with twenty-five lashes each at the public square. Then he directed each barangay to construct a castillo at the edge of the palisades. Convinced that the castillos would be useless, for the enemy could damage them before the defenders could man them, the people disobeyed the directive. They told the Alcalde that they would not recognize or render obedience to their gobernadorcillo whose unreasonable methods had brought them misery.

Disaster struck again. In the municipality's northern territory by the sea, extensive lands sprawled. One time the sea rose and swept away four persons and more than 500 heads of cattle. Iranuns came, plundered the area and sailed away with more than 90 captives.<sup>49</sup>

Their grim past was not lost on the members of the junta of 1818. Besides asking for armaments, they sought the permit to construct a wall with castillos of stone and mortar for the security of the armaments.<sup>50</sup> For greater incentives and mobility for the fighters, Gobernadorcillo Pedro de San Pablo Alcantara also asked for dispensation from contributions, corvee labor and personal services for the thirty mounted men assigned to watch the coast, and exemption from some occupations for the populace when there were Moros in the vicinity. At such a critical time, every available person would be needed to

47. AGI Filipinas 490.

48. All information in this paragraph was taken from PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fols. 105-106.

49. PNA EP-CS 1791-1891, fols. 253-253b.

50. PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fol. 111b.

man castillos, patrol possible entrances to the town and guard their farms.<sup>51</sup>

#### AZAOLA'S ALTERNATIVE

After going over the reports of the beleaguered towns, on 16 January 1819, Azaola wrote his own reactions which he sent to Governor Folgueras together with the town reports.<sup>52</sup> He believed that not all the artillery in Manila's storage depot would meet the number of cannons sought by the towns. Neither was construction of castillos and baluartes the answer. These fortifications, to his mind, would be inadequate to preserve the towns from raids.

Azaola believed that the Moros would not be so senseless as to launch a frontal attack against such fortifications. They would execute a feint, spread out in the countryside beyond artillery range of the castillos and baluartes, then plunder the grainfields and livestock, raze scattered houses and capture their owners.<sup>53</sup> The people would seek flight. Since fear is infectious, the defenders of the castillos and baluartes would react in the same manner. They would abandon their forts and hand over the precious armaments to the raiders on a silver platter.<sup>54</sup>

In the past, even in time of full alert, Azaola observed that castillos and baluartes were not manned by sufficient or courageous men.<sup>55</sup> Frequently because of laziness and laxity, Azaola said, only two guards held a fort. Consequently, with not enough men to man the guns in time of attack, the guards would take to their heels or surrender themselves as well as the fort and its ordnance. Not only that, Azaola continued, the Moros repeatedly surprised the bantayes in deep slumber. For their negligence, the Bicolanos paid dearly. The captured guns from castillos and baluartes found their way to the batteries of marauding Moro pancos that wrought havoc on land and sea.

The defense plans of each town were basically defective. Azaola wanted the plans based on the concept of dynamic or aggressive

51. *Ibid.*, 110–110b.

52. The bundle of manuscripts containing the town reports does not have any report from the town of Calabanga.

53. In her thesis, Reber said the "Sulus" were "nervous" with forts, since they themselves built forts for their defenses. If that were true, Azaola could be right. Anne Lindsay Reber, "The Sulu World in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries: A Historiographical Problem in British Writings on Malay Piracy," (M.A. dissertation, Cornell University, 1966) p. 178.

54. PNA EP-CS 1797–1852, fol. 140b.

55. All information in this paragraph and subsequent ones was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797–1852, fols. 140–141b, 142–143, 144–146b, 149b.



offense, not static defense. He wanted each town to have twenty or twenty-five muskets, and at the threat of a raid, the following system should be operative:

An equal number of the most efficient and courageous men should be armed with muskets and reenforced with the rest of the inhabitants armed with spears, arrows and other appropriate armaments. They should come out to do harm to the invaders at the point of attack, and with the natives' knowledge of their own land, they will not only enjoy the advantages of defending themselves but of inflicting damage to be remembered.

He said that the Moros feared muskets just as the natives feared the few and badly handled muskets of the Moros. In raids of the last year, the fifty muskets of the Moros terrified the natives, but when the natives got hold of only two muskets, they repelled a large number of Moros.

Azaola, however, did not totally discard the *baluartes*. In his scheme, they were useful. He said,

The towns should have *baluartes* at the beaches as they do at present to serve as lookout posts or watchtowers so that having observed the movements of the Moros and places where they intend to land, they should immediately notify the people who should come out with their arms to defend their properties instead of becoming cowed and flee . . . or the most valorous effort they could exert is to get into a palisade solely capable of holding back the Moros, and from there, coolly watch them rob and burn their houses.

He wanted the townpeople to pay for the muskets, following the method of payment of fees for fiestas and rituals, namely, by contribution, so that they would be safeguarded and used for the town defense. Out of justice, he recommended the men and their leader who would handle the muskets be exempted from tribute and personal services, on condition that they cleaned and took care of the armaments and be instructed in handling them twice or thrice a month. So that the arms as well as the munitions would not be employed for purposes other than defense, he preferred them kept and looked after in the parish houses. And no musket should be taken without the knowledge of the Padre.

#### THE EGUÍA-ZUÑIGA DEFENSE PLAN

For a more objective evaluation of Azaola's defense proposal for Camarines, on 30 January 1819, Folgueras wisely sent it for comment to Jose de Eguía and Antonio de Zuñiga, both past Alcaldes Mayores

of Camarines.<sup>56</sup> Their reply, on February 1819, was most interesting and challenging. Accepting some points and rejecting others in Azaola's proposal, Eguía and Zuñiga wrote a three-point proposal of their own.<sup>57</sup> They proposed the following:

1. Stone towers similar to those in the Mediterranean which effectively warded off the Berber corsairs should be constructed. These towers could serve as safe depositories for other arms. Only two or three guns of good calibre would be sufficient to fortify a tower, for the guns could be moved from place to place as necessity demanded and fired through gunports strategically located to cover every avenue of approach.
2. An *armadilla* should be organized to guard the northern and southern waters of Camarines. In fact, the towns were agreeable to this. Mambulao and Paracale would provide two gunboats and Indan and Daet two *faluas*. With this *armadilla* cruising between Canimo and Mambulao, the contracosta would be secure. So would the southern coast, if another *armadilla* of two *faluas* and a gunboat formed by the combined efforts of Milaor, Libmanan, Nueva Caceres and Calabanga would patrol the waters from Calampinay to Siruma.
3. For the *partido* of Bicol, the heart of Camarines, it would be ideal to organize a company of infantry numbering 100 men under trustworthy officers. This could easily be done, the Eguía-Zuñiga plan said, in that place where arms were sufficient. When drilled and disciplined, especially by a former officer and European non-commissioned officers, and with an experienced armorer servicing their arms, this body of men could cope with any emergency. This plan would be adapted in the district of Bicol, Eguía and Zuñiga clarified, but not at the contracosta for reasons they took pains to explain.

With regard to Azaola's desire to let the townspeople pay for the muskets, *per modum contributionis*, Eguía and Zuñiga decided otherwise. Being former province heads of Camarines, they were well aware that, among Bicolanos, contributions were damaging. They were a source of abuse for *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay*, an

56. Jose de Eguía was a retired Colonel of Militia and *Alcalde Mayor* who spent the best years of his life and personal fortune in public service in these islands. AGI Filipinas 808. His colleague Antonio de Zuñiga as a province executive so pleased the secular and religious clergy of Camarines that they petitioned for his extension in office. PNA EP-CS 1799-1820, fols. 321-322.

57. All information in this paragraph and the next was taken from PNA EP-CS 1797-1852, fols. 144-146b, 149b.

imposition on the poor, and were usually endless. The two proposed that the guns and munitions should be handed over to the people on condition that the outgoing gobernadorcillo return all of them in their original condition. In case of any deficiency, he should pay the costs which should be noted down, and the parish priest should be present at the proceeding to avert the usual cheating. The Eguía-Zuñiga proposal ended with a special recommendation for the defense of Libmanan, one of the most frequently raided towns in the bay area.

On February 1819 Folgueras said the Azaola and Eguía-Zuñiga proposals would be forwarded to the Ministers of Royal Finance for a "most just, economical and proper" resolution.

As the Finance Ministry's cumbersome bureaucratic machinery went on its sluggish way to produce the promised resolution, fortunately the intensity and frequency of raids slackened for the whole Bicol region. The hard lessons from the crippling defeats in 1818 of Moro pirates at Tabgon and Pitogo bays and other minor encounters had an enduring effect on the Mindanao and Sulu pirates. Until 1823 their depredations were less frequent and less serious.<sup>58</sup> They could no longer mount sizeable raiding fleets of eighty to a hundred or more vessels to spread as much death and destruction as in previous years. But raids still continued. The Camarines armadilla seemed unable to completely stop the pirates who used years of experience and cunning to their advantage.

As the inhabitants of the harassed towns of Camarines continued to suffer, in the light of available documents, it seems that the towns did not receive the expected government assistance. But, among the civil and military officials who were posted in the Bicol region after 1818, there were dedicated officials who worked for the improvement of local defenses.

#### THE TELEGRAFOS

One of the most dedicated officials was Jose Ma. Peñaranda, a talented military officer and a nephew of Governor Pascual Enrile. In 1830 he organized the *telegrafo*, an early warning system that stretched along the coasts of the Bicol region up to the province of Tayabas.<sup>59</sup>

58. Bernaldez, *Reseña histórica*, p. 140.

59. PNA EP-A 1800-1858, fols. 289b-290. PNA EP-T 1827-1886, fol. 250b. Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia general de Filipinas* (Madrid, 1895) 2: 562. MN Ms. 2237, doc. 2, fols. 36, 36v; MN Ms. 2228, fol. 39. Today in San Jose, Camarines Sur, there is a barrio called Telegrafo which was established in 1875 to commemorate the erection of a *telegrafo* nearby. PNL HDP Camarines Sur, IV-29, p. 96.

With its better organization and more signal equipment, it was an improvement on the former signal system. When they sighted sails on the horizon, from their observation posts on elevated heights, the *telegrafistas* or signal men hoisted signal discs or waved a flag or rang a belfry bell to warn the populace.<sup>60</sup> At night, they made known the presence or approach of raiders by lighting bonfires, candles, or torches or pealing bells or firing three cannon shots.<sup>61</sup>

But Peñaranda's promising project was plagued by natural and human problems. It seems that professional jealousy cannot be discounted but, from dearth of documents, it can only be surmised. Antonio de Siguenza, Alcalde Mayor of Camarines Norte around 1830, who was a military officer himself, was an avid disciple of the static defense strategy. He was all for defensive fortifications like the palisade. To him, Peñaranda's signal devices were mere toys, and he rested his opposition on sensible reasons. He claimed that the spyglasses for sentinels were costly. The towns with a small population could not supply the considerable number of men needed, and the dangerous groundswells whipped up by fierce northerlies made communication with the outlying islands difficult and risky.<sup>62</sup> In place of telegrafistas, Siguenza employed *balatan* gatherers and sea turtle catchers as lookouts and informers. Unfortunately, they were not reliable. Authorities in Manila ordered the Commandant of Burias to set up signal stations and not rely on *balateros* whose reports were called inopportune and exaggerated.<sup>63</sup>

Boundary wrangles between provinces created difficulties as well as the fear of the Moros. For safety, stranded dwellers moved to the interior, leaving large coastal areas uninhabited, sometimes twenty miles at a stretch, which was a wide gap between *telégrafo* stations, unless there were persons willing to man lonely relay stations within the desolate area.<sup>64</sup> Foul weather impaired the visibility of signals between remote stations, especially if jagged and heavily timbered hills intervened.

Night time also induced confusion. Hunters' campfires and fishermen's torches were sometimes confused with signal bonfires, so that Peñaranda more than once thought of using *cohetes* or skyrockets. In fact, he tried them one night in May, in the season of the "pirate

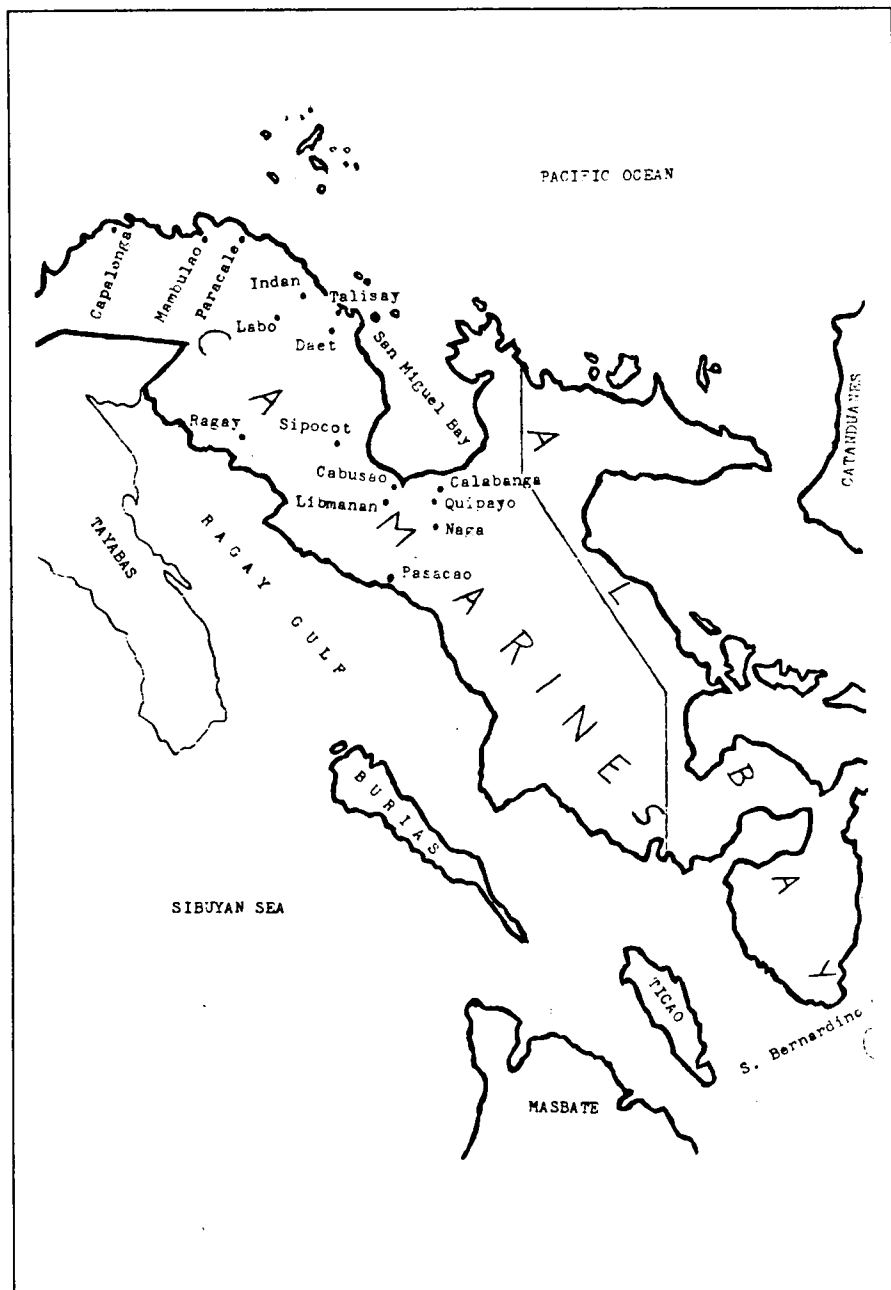
60. PNA EP-CS 1837-1850, fol. 2.

61. PNA EP-S 1749-1848, fol. 123. PNA VP-A, vol. XI, 3b-4. BR 26: 212; 51: 270.

62. MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40v.

63. MN Ms. 2228, fol. 30. PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fol. 170.

64. MN Ms. 2237, fol. 36, 36v. PNA EP-S 1793-1835, fol. 461.



wind" when slave-raiders were again ranging about the eastern and northern seas.<sup>65</sup>

Somehow or other, natural impediments were overcome, but problems posed by human factors, though remediable, taxed the patience and inventiveness of officials. Among the simple farmers and fishermen, it was not easy to look for persons intelligent enough to understand the signals. This problem pestered Peñaranda and his counterpart in Samar when both of them tried to establish an Albay-Samar link.<sup>66</sup> As a remedy, Peñaranda issued seven directives for greater efficiency of the telegrafos. Governor Enrile also lent a hand by reducing the signals to three, simple enough even for the unlettered to comprehend. Enrile probably intervened in the positioning of signal discs or flags. The simplified signal was a disc or flag "on the tip of the signal pole means—no Moros; at the right side—there are Moros; at the left side—there are Moros."<sup>67</sup>

Yet no amount of service regulations or signal simplifications could mitigate the effects of what Peñaranda called the Indio's "apathy and natural negligence" which always spelled disaster.<sup>68</sup> Thus Moro raiders sometimes penetrated towns undetected by telegrafos or overwhelmed a telegrafo and carried off its signal equipments.<sup>69</sup> But on the whole, the telegrafo benefitted the Bicolanos.

#### SIGUENZA'S MILITIA

The people continued relying on their sentinel system. By 1830 bantayes were manning outposts from Balogo, Pasacao to Calabanga and up to Cabusao for the defense of southern Camarines.<sup>70</sup> But like the telegrafo system, the bantay system was also plagued with problems. The poor expressed resentment over the way bantayes were appointed. Almost always the lot fell on the timaguas or the poor, not on past Capitanes and members of their families.<sup>71</sup> Towns in general also complained. To supply a regular levy of twenty to thirty able-bodied men caused a significant drain on a town's manpower. It weakened a town's defense and affected its economy when men were recruited for the planting or for harvest season.

65. PNA EP-A 1800-1858, fol. 289b. PNA EP-CS 1837-1850, fol. 235.

66. PNA EP-S 1793-1835, fol. 461.

67. *Ibid.*, 462.

68. PNA EP-A 1800-1858, fol. 289b. PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fol. 183.

69. PNA EP-CS 1837-1850, fols. 2-2b.

70. AFIO Ms. 1823, fols. 29, 46-48.

71. *Ibid.*, 48.

However, by 1830 after Siguenza had assumed the office of alcalde mayor of northern Camarines, the northern defenses considerably improved,<sup>72</sup> for he was a military officer himself. Though Peñaranda characterized him as an *alcalde-trader*, a sickly man and quite incompetent, by his works he seemed to have been a public servant sufficiently devoted to the welfare of his people.<sup>73</sup> He organized the militia corps which effectively minimized, if not totally checked, Moro pirates in Bicol. He armed them with about 200 muskets. In the beginning, several factors neutralized the militia's potential: official incompetence and native resistance and pusillanimity.<sup>74</sup> Either from lack of experience in office or incompetence, Siguenza made the mistake of compelling them to render a rigorous and continuous service like regular troops. Considering militia service as another form of corvée labor, the principales shunned bearing arms. Those who were left to serve, Siguenza wrote, were the members of society from whom no one expected efficiency and dedication. When the alarm would sound, together with those who had nothing to lose, they fled to the mountains.<sup>75</sup>

But later on, Siguenza wrote of well armed and disciplined militiamen defending Capalonga, the most vulnerable and harassed town of the northern region.<sup>76</sup> He had finally overcome the northerners' irresoluteness and resentment by working on the time-tested assumption that those who have more to lose in life would be more zealous in defending their families, farmlands and other property. He, therefore, made the sons of the principales bear arms and put them under the command of respectable persons and sergeants from the regular force.<sup>77</sup>

These young men responded with enthusiasm, so much so that on one occasion, Siguenza reported, these fired-up militiamen boarded wretched looking bancas, routed Moro pirates in the outlying islets and rescued the captives. Previously, Siguenza said, they would not have done that, for a shout of the word "Moros" alone was sufficient for the towns to be left deserted.<sup>78</sup>

72. On 24 January 1829, Governor Mariano Ricafort appointed Siguenza to head the new Politico-Military district of Camarines Norte. PNA EP-CS 1817-1898, fols. 36b, 40.

73. MN Ms. 2228, fol. 30.

74. MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40.

75. MN Ms. 2228, fol. 30. One of the effects of Moro raids was the return of Christianized Indios to their former life in the mountains. AFIO 92/27, fol. 5; 92/28, fol. 29.

76. MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid. 40b.

The militiamen were not landbound. They also manned fighting ships. Three faluas manned by militiamen from the towns that constructed and maintained these vessels patrolled the northern coasts. They concentrated on Siruma Point, the most likely passage the Moros had to take to assault northern maritime towns.<sup>79</sup> The provincial flotilla of gunboats also cruised about these waters.<sup>80</sup>

With the improved defenses bruited about, not a single Moro marauder was sighted nearby, reported Siguenza.<sup>81</sup> Trading crafts carrying foodstuffs and stores to littoral settlements and mining towns plying the northern region's coastal waters, and fishing vessels safely put out to sea again to gather balatan, catch fish and sea turtles that abounded in the northern seas and the once dangerous offshore islets.

### CONCLUSIONS

In this brief survey, two important points emerge as I have noted earlier. They are the government neglect of local defenses and the alleged Bicolano "apathy and natural negligence."

Earlier articles in *Philippine Studies* chronicling Moro raids in Bicol from 1580 to 1792 pointed out government neglect in providing for local defenses, at least, in the Bicol region.<sup>82</sup> There is evidence, however, to indicate that it is wrong to think that the government totally neglected Camarines. In the case of Talisay which was said to have "never received any endowment of arms before" unlike other towns, it is implied that the government had sent arms to Camarines. If the government earlier adopted a hard-line arms control policy, it reconsidered that policy in the 1790s to arm coastal villages constantly attacked by Iranun pirates stationed in Burias island.<sup>83</sup> It definitely took action when it decided to entrust much needed arms and munitions to alcaldes mayores in 1799.<sup>84</sup> Later the towns clamored for arms and ammunitions, for they had lost their armaments either through corrupt officials or natural calamities or Moro raiders.

When the Bicolanos put up lookouts, signal systems and sentinels before 1818, there must have been some government leadership, especially after the official decree of 1753. This was followed by the Folgueras decree of 1818 which was a clear evidence of strong gov-

79. Ibid. 40.

80. PNA EP-CS 1799-1820, fol. 421b.

81. All information in this paragraph was taken from MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 40b; PNA EP-CS 1799-1820, fol. 421b.

82. See *Philippine Studies*, 34, 3rd & 4th quarters, 1986; 35, 2nd quarter, 1987.

83. PNA EP-A 1799-1864. Warren, *Sulu Zone*, p. 177.

84. Ibid.



ernment concern. Finally, the establishment of better defense systems in the form of telegrafos, militias and flotillas after 1818 by *alcaldes mayores* appears to be nothing more than the fulfillment of the suggested measures of Folgueras, and the proposal of Eguía and Zuñiga. What clearer evidence of government solicitude for Camarines Bicolanos can there be?

With regard to the Bicolano Indio's "apathy and natural negligence," two former Spanish officials can be cited. They are Peñaranda and Siguenza. They had the strongest words against the Bicolanos whom they accused of laziness and apathy.

But the Bicolano might also be viewed in a more favorable light. His devil-may-care attitude stemmed more from the nature of the job than from his natural inclination. To be a telegrafista or a *bantay* was to leave family and livelihood. Added to that was the unfair partiality to the principalia against the poor in the assignments to sentry and telegrafo duties. He was also disturbed by constant worry about the next tribute. The nonfulfillment of these dues meant either twenty-five lashes or a prison term. The Bicolano might really be what Peñaranda and Siguenza claimed, but he had redeeming virtues. In meeting a crisis, he manifested resourcefulness and inventiveness. When led properly, he responded not only with docility and warmth, but also with courage. Exemption from tribute could have been an attractive incentive for him to serve well, but Governor Enrile rejected the recommendation. He looked at defense duties, like a stint at the telegrafo, as a communal obligation.<sup>85</sup> What Siguenza did further for the militia is not known. But three years later, after Peñaranda had fully grasped the people's difficulties, as an *alcalde mayor*, he ordered the telegrafista's tribute paid from the communal funds of respective towns.<sup>86</sup> The people responded favorably. If the popularity he enjoyed and the honors he received were a gauge of his personal and public relations with the Bicolanos, he must have either overcome his prejudice or skillfully practised the art of accommodation. At his death, the grateful people of Albay preserved his memory with a monument in the plaza and a road named after him at the provincial capital.<sup>87</sup>

85. PNA EP-S 1793-1835, fols. 461-462.

86. PNA VP-A, VII, fols. 12-12b.

87. Peñaranda was an efficient aide-de-camp, adjutant and military engineer under Governor Enrile and a much-cited colonel in the Moro wars before he was appointed provincial magistrate of Albay in 14 May 1834. He was one of the few dedicated and honest *alcaldes mayores* before 1844. At his death, the grateful people of Albay heaped honors on him. BR 51: 55-56. Eliodoro Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century* (Quezon City 1969) p. 122. F. Jagor, *Viajes por Filipinas*, trad. del Aleman por Sebastian Vidal y Soler (Madrid: Aribau y Cia, 1875), p. 100. *Revista de Filipinas* (Julio 1875) 1:49, 68.