

# philippine studies

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

---

## **The Economy of the Bukidnon Plateau During the American Period**

Mardonio M. Lao

*Philippine Studies* vol. 35, no. 3 (1987) 316–331

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

**The Economy of the Bukidnon Plateau  
During the American Period**  
MARDONIO M. LAO

This article is an attempt to trace the economic history of Bukidnon during the American colonial period. Three major economic trends during the period will be dealt with – foodcrop (rice and corn) production, cattle ranching, and pineapple growing. These topics will be discussed with the ultimate view of understanding the Bukidnon natives' participation in each of these economic trends and activities. Before touching on the main issues we shall take a look at the background that led to the American occupation.

**THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF BUKIDNON**

The Americans formally occupied Bukidnon in 1907 when it was placed under the administration of the Department of the Interior, then headed by Dean C. Worcester as Secretary. Prior to this year, it was governed as a subprovince of Misamis. The reported exploitation suffered by the Bukidnons at the hands of businessmen from the seaside communities of Misamis and the alleged negligence of that province's officials in the affairs of the natives prompted the Americans, through Worcester, to actively occupy Bukidnon.<sup>1</sup>

This article is a revision of a paper presented during the Sixth National Conference on Local/National History at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, on 11-14 December 1984.

1. Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), p. 447; *Journal of William Cameron Forbes*, vol. IV (4 March 1910-7 August 1911), p. 416. It is important to note that most of the sources on this period in Bukidnon are American.

The exploitation was often perpetrated by a "ring" of *comerciantes* who sated the Bukidnons with wine before they bought the latter's products at absurdly low costs. The following prices were commonly paid at Cagayan for Bukidnon products: "... one-half picul of gutta-percha or hemp worth approximately ₱12.00 — one jar of salt worth ₱0.20"; "... 3 pounds of hemp worth about ₱0.55 — two boxes of matches costing ₱0.20 each"; "... two bid-bid of hemp or gutta-percha worth approximately ₱1.10 — a package of cigarettes worth ₱0.06"; and "... one bid-bid of hemp — 1 Highland cream can full of kerosene oil." <sup>2</sup>

To monopolize the lucrative Bukidnon trade, influential persons and rich businessmen from Cagayan de Oro, Agusan, and Gusa divided Bukidnon into spheres of commercial interests. (Agusan and Gusa are now parts of Cagayan de Oro City.) The western part of the province covering the headwaters of the Cagayan River was controlled by a certain Señor Ulong Vamenta, a one-time *presidente* of Cagayan. The Southern and Southeastern sections were private preserves of Chinese businessmen and Filipino *principalias* from Agusan and Gusa.<sup>3</sup> These people were represented on the plateau by their agents — the municipal *presidentes* and other local officials who were appointed by the provincial governor of Misamis at the dictation of or under the influence of the businessmen. The *presidente*, who usually "wore a white suit" and smoked cigarettes, was assigned to buy personally the farm products of the Bukidnons at ridiculously low prices. He usually did this by terrorizing his victims either with the use of a handgun or ordering the natives to trade with appointed Cagayan *comerciantes*. Failure to do this meant accusing the Bukidnons on trumped-up charges of sedition. The other local officials were used as debt collectors or *muchachos*.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Cagayan landowners in Bukidnon invariably demanded that their Bukidnon tenants should sell their abaca and other cash crops to no other persons than their landlords.<sup>5</sup>

2. Dean C. Worcester, "Report of . . . Secretary of the Interior, Manila, P.I., October 28, 1907," *Report of the Philippine Commission (RPC)*, 1907 (3 Pts.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), Pt. 2, p. 8.

3. Frederick Lewis, "Report of . . . Lieutenant-Governor, Subprovince of Bukidnon, Province of Agusan, May 17, 1908," *RPC*, 1908 (2 Pts.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), Pt. 1, p. 202.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

5. "Protocolo de Misamis, 1901-1903," Tomo 2, Numero 14 (4 de Febrero de 1902). pp. 41-43. Philippine National Archives (PNA), Manila.

Other persons interested in trade with the Bukidnons first of all had to secure a written permit from those who controlled that part of the province where they planned to do business as observed by Captain Oliver Van Horn, an American Army officer who had been to Bukidnon in 1902. In that year, the captain met a group of coastal traders on their way to Bukidnon with seven carabaos loaded with rice and wine. The men had with them a written permit duly signed by the presidente of Agusan allowing them to trade with the Bukidnons for one month.<sup>6</sup> To add insult to injury, the so-called travelling merchants used the Bukidnon municipal buildings as "stopping places and storehouses" for whatever products they deceitfully acquired from the Bukidnons.<sup>7</sup>

It was in these circumstances that the Americans intervened in Bukidnon affairs. In an effort to free the Bukidnons from their bondage and thus improve their lives, Worcester, together with his private secretary, Mr. Zinn, a certain Frederick Lewis and Lieutenant Manuel Fortich, Sr. of the Philippine Constabulary, went on an inspection trip to Bukidnon some time in August 1907. From what he personally observed, the Secretary was convinced that the Bukidnons lived a miserable life, prompting him to comment that these people were, perhaps, the most "robbed" and "oppressed" of all the non-Christian Filipinos.<sup>8</sup> They must therefore be helped. To begin with, the American colonial government, through Worcester, proposed to replace the Filipino governor of Misamis with an American, who, as the Secretary expected, could protect and attend to the needs of the Bukidnons.

Anticipating objections to his proposal from the concerned members of the 1907 Philippine Legislature, Worcester opted for an alternative — the segregation of that part of Misamis occupied mostly by Bukidnons under a new and separate administrative jurisdiction. The separated territory was called Bukidnon, a name derived from its inhabitants.

Bukidnon was, in turn, organized as a subprovince of Agusan, a province that was created pursuant to Act No. 1693 of the

6. Oliver Van Horn, "Exploring Expedition from Cotabato to Cagayan, March 18, 1902," *Annual Report of the War Department (ARWD)*, June 30, 1902 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 590.

7. Lewis, "Lieutenant-Governor," *RPC* 1908, p. 203.

8. *RPC*, 1910, p. 71.

Philippine Commission.<sup>9</sup> It remained in this status until October 1914. Beginning 1 September, Bukidnon was separated from Agusan and became a special province of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, an office that took the place of the defunct Moro Province.<sup>10</sup> This was the province's political status i.e., a special province, until the outbreak of the Pacific War.

#### RICE AND CORN PRODUCTION

One of the most acute problems encountered by the Bukidnons was observed by Worcester during his 1907 inspection trip was the economic poverty throughout the province. He found that the people in the settlements he visited did not have reliable sources of food supply, save for some "scraggy banana plants."<sup>11</sup> The people subsisted mainly on whatever root crops they could plant and harvest from their hillside *kaingin*. Rice and corn was very scarce, obtainable only through trade with the Misamis coastal inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the American occupation of Bukidnon the production of rice and corn was not given much importance because Bukidnon farmers concentrated on the planting of abaca, their primary trade product with the Misamis businessmen who informally established a so-called "hemp trust" before 1907.

To alleviate the economic plight confronting the Bukidnons, the colonial officials initiated the development and cultivation of highly arable but idle agricultural lands in the province into dependable sources of food supply. Emphasis was placed on the production of rice and corn, using what then would constitute improved farming methods that the colonial official brought in to the Bukidnons.<sup>13</sup> The most remarkable feature of that new

9. *Executive Minutes of the Philippine Commission, September 1, 1906 to August 31, 1907*, Vol. XXII, p. 61. *Public Laws passed by the Philippine Commission during the period from September 1, 1906 to October 5, 1907* (31 Vols.; Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1908), VI, pp. 269-73.

10. Mardonio M. Lao, "Bukidnon and the Bukidnons, 1860-1945: Colonialists' Attempts at Integration" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, 1984), p. 106.

11. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present*, p. 485.

12. Cesar Fortich, a private interview held at his residence, Cagayan de Oro City, 19 December 1980.

13. These officials were: Dean C. Worcester in his capacity as Secretary of the Interior, an office into which Bukidnon was administered; Frederick Lewis, an ex-Wyoming cowboy who became the first lieutenant-governor of the Subprovince of Bukidnon; and Manuel Fortich, Sr.

agricultural practice was the use of disk plows pulled by work animals — cow and carabao — all supplied free to Bukidnon farmers.

Bukidnons who lived in permanent settlements readily responded to the food production program of the colonial government. They “brought under cultivation” whatever “vacant lands in the vicinity” of their towns.<sup>14</sup> By 1918 some 7,679 hectares of rice and corn lands were cultivated, 620 hectares and 2,300 hectares of which were planted to rice and corn, respectively.<sup>15</sup> The production of these foodcrops was intensified. By 1939, a total of 21,738.09 hectares were tilled and developed for rice and corn production purposes.

Based on the 1918 developed area, it appeared that the planting of corn was given more emphasis than rice. This was favored by the suitability of the Bukidnon soil for corn production. It was reported that during different seasons, corn grew well with stalks ranging from “10 to 15 feet high.” On the average, each corn plant bore from “one to three ears.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, there was no wonder why corn produced in Bukidnon increased from 16,881 cavans in 1918 to 80,432 cavans in 1928, and to 145,894 cavans in 1939. As for rice production, there was also a noticeable increase. From available data, rice harvested in the province amounted to 15,000 cavans in 1918, and 55,656 cavans in 1939.<sup>17</sup>

The increase in rice and corn production during the colonial period may be generally accounted for by two factors. First was the positive response of the Bukidnon farmers to the new and improved agricultural practices. They adapted the sedentary farming method where disk plows and work animals were used for land preparation. Some Bukidnon farmers even went to the extent of harnessing disk plows to men to break the soil by sheer human force whenever work animals were not readily available. At least this was observed by Worcester in the town of Sumilao during one of his

14. Frederick Lewis, “Report of . . . Lieutenant-Governor of the Subprovince of Bukidnon, June 30, 1908,” *RPC*, 1908 (2 Pts.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), Pt. I, p. 207.

15. Teopisto Guingona, “Report of . . . Acting Governor, Subprovince of Bukidnon, June 30, 1908,” *Report of the Governor-General of the Philippine Islands (RGGPI)*, 1918 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), p. 26.

16. *RPC*, 1912, p. 84.

17. Guingona, “Acting Governor,” *RGGPI*, p. 26.

annual inspection trips to the plateau.<sup>18</sup> Second was the influence of the settlement farm schools that were established in the province at the start of the American colonial regime. Through these schools, better farming techniques were introduced to Bukidnon pupils who eventually put into practice what they learned. The settlement farm schools contributed remarkably to the increase in food production, not only in Bukidnon, but throughout the Philippines. In 1917 for instance, the governor-general of the Philippines reported that "agricultural production," particularly in foodcrops, increased "throughout the non-Christian territories" of the country because of the "schools (settlement farm schools) which serve as the medium for the systematic direction and extension of agriculture . . ." among the non-Christian Filipinos.<sup>19</sup>

Despite bright prospects in agricultural production, rice and corn harvests in the Bukidnon farms were barely sufficient to feed the province's growing population which had practically doubled from 28,150 in 1903 to 57,195 in 1932.<sup>20</sup> Given this situation food shortages often occurred, making the people's lives pathetic and miserable according to Fr. Lucas, a Jesuit priest of Malaybalay.<sup>21</sup>

Food importation from the neighboring Misamis towns was resorted to. In 1910, rice imports for Bukidnon amounted to 1,000 piculs. This volume did not totally solve the food problem faced by the famine-stricken inhabitants. Many of them still suffered a great deal of hunger and they were often forced to subsist on *camote* (sweet potatoes) and on other root crops that they could harvest from their kaingin. Rice importation continued to the 1930s, although food production showed better results after 1910.

Several factors may be cited to explain the food shortages in Bukidnon. First, was the extremely limited area designated as agricultural land. For example, of the 1,002,589 hectares of land comprising the province in 1918, only 15,656 hectares or 1.5

18. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present*, p. 487.

19. *RGGPI*, 1917, p. 60.

20. *RGGPI*, 1918, p. 50. Filomeno Bautista, *Glimpses of Mindanao* (Manila: Tong Cheong Son Company, 1938), p. 82.

21. "Lucas to Willman, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, January 25, 1935." *Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (APP)*, Loyola House of Studies (LHS), Manila.

percent were classified as agricultural land.<sup>22</sup> But of the 15,656 hectares, only 7,679 hectares were actually cultivated, a mere 49 percent. Of the latter area, only 620 hectares, or 8 percent, and 2,300 hectares, or 29.9 percent, were devoted to rice and corn, respectively. Similar patterns persisted to the late 1930s. In 1939, a total of 126,969 hectares were designated as fitted for agricultural production.<sup>23</sup> Only 21,738.09 hectares, or 17.1 percent of this total land area were tilled, while a large area constituting 82.9 percent remained barren. To make matters worse was the fact that of the entire cultivated area, less than 50 percent was planted to rice and corn.<sup>24</sup> The larger portion of the land was utilized for such industries as cattle ranching and, in the 1920s, pineapple growing.

In effect, the size of farmlands was also limited, a condition not favorable to any attempt at increased production, at least during those years when Bukidnon farmers were not yet exposed to highly advanced and scientific agricultural methods. Throughout the American colonial period, the size of more than 50 percent of the rice and corn farms in the province ranged from one-fifth of a hectare to two hectares. Of the 4,367 rice and corn farms in 1918, there were 2,958 or 67.7 percent with areas from one-fifth to two hectares.<sup>25</sup> The same trend prevailed in 1939 when 3,600 farms, or 45 percent out of the total 7,992 farms had areas that did not go beyond the two hectares.<sup>26</sup>

This situation was worsened by a comparatively fast population increase. From data at hand, it may be contended that food production lagged behind population growth throughout the American period. The province's population grew from 39,336 in 1918 to 63,124 in 1939, while the total rice and corn production correspondingly increased from 31,881 to 201,640 cavans. These figures reveal that the population rose by 62 percent from 1918

22. *Census of the Philippine Islands, 1918* (4 Vols.; Bureau of Printing, 1921), III, p. 51.

23. *Census of the Philippine Islands, 1939* (3 Vols.; Bureau of Printing, 1940), I, Pt. I, pp. 308-9. It is evident that the area identified as agricultural lands in 1939 was smaller than that of 1918. This was effect of Act No. 2968 approved on 22 February 1922 which separated from Bukidnon the municipal districts of Claveria, Lourdes, Lumbia and Talimao. These districts were in turn made parts of the Misamis Province.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

25. *Census of the Philippines, 1918*, p. 180.

26. *Census of the Philippines, 1939*, Pt. I, p. 310.



to 1939, while rice and corn production for the same period rose only by 15 percent. Thus, it is needless to say that rice and corn produced in Bukidnon was not sufficient to meet the food demands of its fast-growing inhabitants. Hence, the food shortages.

#### CATTLE RANCHING

While the Bukidnon farmers were made to concentrate on rice and corn production, the Americans like Worcester and their Filipino associates were attracted by the province's economic potential. It may be relevant to point out here that many Americans were not only attracted to Bukidnon's topography as an ideal place for cattle ranching, but also to its climate and beautiful scenery. To them, Bukidnon was an American country because of its cool climate and splendid landscape characterized by verdant plains covered with a dense growth of green grass, deep canyons, crystal-clear streams, and attractive waterfalls in different parts of the plateau. The Mailag Valley in particular was described by Governor-General Forbes, who had been to Bukidnon in 1911, as a "smiling . . . [and] so alluring a country" which, he had seen in no other place in the Philippines except Bukidnon.<sup>27</sup> So interested was this Governor General in Bukidnon's economic potential that he noted in his *Journal* his dream of retiring from the government service and spending his lifetime in this great Valley where he intended to engage in cattle ranching and in cacao, coffee, and coconut growing.<sup>28</sup>

Thus every potential of Bukidnon being considered, the province, according to C.F. Baker, a one-time head of the College of Agriculture in the U.P. at Los Baños, was the "California of the Philippines."<sup>29</sup> For his part, P.J. Wester, an agriculture advisor for the Department of Mindanao and Sulu from 1917 to 1920, viewed the plateau, especially the upper slopes of Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan, as the best sites for health resorts in Mindanao and Sulu because of their perfect location, favorable climate, and good elevation.<sup>30</sup>

27. *Journal of Cameron Forbes*, Vol. IV (4 March 1910-7 August 1911): 419.

28. *Ibid.*

29. C.F. Baker, "Bukidnon, the California of the Philippines," *The Citizen*, Vol. III, No. 14 (August 1920): 8.

30. P. J. Wester, *Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago: Their Natural Resources and Opportunity for Development* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1922), pp. 28-29.

But of all the manifold economic resources available in Bukidnon, the Americans were first captivated by the cattle ranching industry. They were quick to understand that the province was and, still is, an ideal cattle region in the Philippines because of its grassy plateau, favorable climate, abundance of water supply, and presence of deep canyons that offer natural safety against contagious animal diseases.

It may be pertinent to mention that before the Americans came, some Filipinos from Cagayan de Oro had already engaged in cattle raising. This economic venture went on to the 1900s. Colonel Andreas, an American Army officer, and his comrades-in-arms observed "tens of thousands of cattle which looked [at them] without fear." They were on their way to Sumilao, a Bukidnon town, in hot pursuit of General Capistrano during the Cagayan de Oro phase of the Filipino-American War that lasted from 1900 to 1901.<sup>31</sup>

The American colonial government revolutionized and formalized the cattle ranching industry when Worcester opened the rich Bukidnon pasturelands for leasehold to his chosen Filipino allies and American capitalists. They were offered a renewable twenty-five year lease with minimal rentals ranging from ₱0.25 to ₱0.30 per hectare.<sup>32</sup> The first company that took advantage of the generous offer was the Agusan Coconut Authority (ACA), a subsidiary of the wholly American-funded corporation, the American-Philippine Company (AMPHILCO). The ACA established the Diklum Ranch, the first and the biggest American-financed ranch in Bukidnon, at Tankulan (now in Manolo Fortich).<sup>33</sup> The ranch covered an area of about ten thousand hectares, a clear infringement of the law which limited the acquisition of Philippine lands to 16 hectares for an individual settler and 1,024 hectares for a corporation.<sup>34</sup> By the late 1900s the Diklum Ranch had about four thousand heads of mostly foreign breed cattle

31. H. R. Andreas, "Harking Back," *The American Oldtimer*, Vol. II, No. 1 (November 1934): 24.

32. "Leasehold Agreement" (Malaybalay, Bukidnon: Bureau of Forest Development, Unpaged).

33. *Joint Preparatory Committee on Philippine Affairs (JPCPA), Report of May 30, 1938* (3 Vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), II, p. 3.

34. Dean C. Worcester and Joseph Ralston Hayden, *The Philippines Past and Present* (New York: The Macmillan Company), New Edition, p. 38, pp. 47-48.

like the disease-resistant Nellore Brahman and Hereford stocks imported from Texas, U.S.A.<sup>35</sup> They constituted roughly 30 percent of the total cattle population throughout the province which in 1919 reached 13,438 head.<sup>36</sup>

Several other companies and private individuals, mostly Americans and a few Filipinos, likewise engaged in ranching. By 1921, some twenty corporations or companies occupying more than 100 hectares each were actively involved in ranching. However, there were only three ranches of any considerable sizes: the Agusan Coconut Company, Worcester's Ranch at Dalwangan, and Anita Thomas Crawford's Bukidnon Cattle and Coffee Company at Santa Fe, Libona.<sup>37</sup> Worcester had another seven-hundred hectare ranch at Mailag (now a part of Valencia), which he developed while concurrently serving as secretary of the Interior and as vice-president and general manager of the AMPHILCO. Upon his death in 1924, this ranch supported a herd of 2,500 cattle. Aside from Worcester, other American ranchers are remembered only by their family names: Waloe, Paradies, the Gaerhardts, Chaloner, and Day. Most of them first came to Bukidnon as soldiers of the American Army during the Filipino-American hostilities.

Perhaps the most popular Filipino rancher before the 1920s whose success in the industry could be equaled or compared with that of some American ranchers, was Manuel Fortich. Of Spanish descent, Fortich, once an officer of the Philippine Constabulary, first came to Bukidnon in 1907 as a guide of Worcester. He was married to the rich Azcona family of Jimenez, Misamis Occidental, and resided in Bukidnon where he served first as an assistant lieutenant-governor, then as governor, and finally as an assemblyman for the province in 1935.

While serving as a government official, Fortich joined the group of American ranchers and put up his own ranches at Maluko and Maramag. By 1920, he had a total of three thousand cattle. After his resignation from the government service in 1921, he devoted himself full-time to ranching. His success in this undertaking can

35. Wester, *Mindanao and Sulu*, p. 31.

36. Teopisto Guingona, "Report of . . . Acting Governor, Department of Mindanao and Sulu, Zamboanga, March 5, 1919," *RGGPI*, 1918, p. 26.

37. Wester, *Mindanao and Sulu*, p. 37. Teodoro Kalaw, "Report of Secretary of Interior, January 1 to December 31, 1921," *RGGPI*, 1921, p. 27

be discerned by the fact that he became one of the biggest ranchers in Bukidnon by the 1920s.

In an effort to contribute to the task of making Bukidnon the foremost cattle country in the Philippines, the provincial government, under the initiative of Fortich as governor, established and managed its own ranch. Known as the Crescent Star Cattle Company, this government ranch was located on ten thousand hectares in Dagumba-an in the former municipal district of Maramag, in the south of the province. The original stock came from Digos, Davao. Later, rinderpest-resistant bulls of a Nellore (Zebu) type were imported, thus improving the quality of the cattle after some time. The herd in that government ranch rapidly multiplied, so that by 1917 it had nearly "1,000 breeding cows and more than 100 mares." A year after, the total number of cows alone reached "1,200 with an average of 5 births daily."<sup>38</sup>

Starting in the 1920s, the colonial government changed its policy on the cattle ranching industry in the Philippines. It decided to leave this enterprise to private capitalists. Cattle ranching then was wide open to interested individuals, regardless of their nationalities. On account of the new colonial policy the American-owned Diklum Ranch was sold to Angel Elizalde, a Manila-based businessman. The Crescent Star Cattle Company was bought by Alejandro Roces in November 1921.<sup>39</sup>

Cattle ranching thenceforth became practically a private undertaking. Many officials of the provincial government either resigned from the service and turned ranchers, or combined public service with ranching. Also, many migrant *dumagat* (those coming from the coastal areas) came to Bukidnon and engaged in the profitable business. As a result, there were about sixty-seven individual ranchers throughout the province by the outbreak of the Pacific War.

The colonial government's new policy on ranching showed positive effects, at least insofar as it paved the way for the increase in the cattle population in Bukidnon. This is proven by the fact that from 14,653 head in the mid-1920s, the total number of cattle in the province reached 58,776 in 1939.<sup>40</sup> Because of

38. *RGGPI*, 1918, p. 51.

39. Kalaw, "Secretary of the Interior," *RGGPI*, 1921, p. 72.

40. Bautista, *Glimpses of Mindanao*, pp. 161-63.

this, Bukidnon became known as the "Cattle Country" of the Philippines even prior to the Second World War.

#### PINEAPPLE GROWING

The Americans' main economic interest in Bukidnon shifted from cattle ranching to pineapple growing by the 1920s. The latter enterprise was initiated by the California Packing Corporation (CALPACK), Hawaii's largest producer of canned pineapple carrying the Del Monte brand. How this corporation came to extend its pineapple operations in Bukidnon needs a brief explanation.

In the 1920s Hawaii's pineapple production declined due to a number of uncontrolled plant pests and diseases. For this reason, the corporation's management looked for the possibility of expanding its venture outside America. Louis Jongeneel, a CALPACK employee, was assigned to do the job. After going to several places in the world, he recommended the Philippines as especially ideal for the project to Alfred Fames, Sr., CALPACK's Vice-President for the Canned Goods Operating Department.

In 1923, Harry White, CALPACK's Hawaiian Division Manager, came to the Philippines to further explore the prospects for pineapple cultivation as earlier recommended. He admitted before the Joint Preparatory Committee on the Philippine Affair's hearing on 16 June 1937 that he came to the country upon the invitation of a Philippine Commissioner he met in Hawaii. The said Commissioner had encouraged him to "come and try" the Philippines for pineapple production.<sup>41</sup>

From 1923 to 1927, White, together with Bureau of Science officials, made soil surveys and studies all over the country. After several trials, they finally found the rich and arable lands around Libona, Santa Fe and the present Manolo Fortich — all in Bukidnon — highly suitable for pineapple raising.<sup>42</sup> They found that these places' topography, elevation, climate, and soil conditions were similar to those of Hawaii, thus making Bukidnon not only the "California," but also the "Hawaii" of the Philippines.

41. *JPCPA, May 20, 1938*, III, p. 18.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

The planting of pineapple on a commercial scale was started in 1928. It was undertaken and supervised by the Philippine Packing Corporation (PPC), a subsidiary of the CALPACK. The PPC was formed and chartered in 1926 with Harry White as the first president and James Crawford, the first company manager for operations.<sup>43</sup>

In accordance with the existing Philippine public land law, the PPC was originally permitted to operate on 1,024 hectares of land in Santa Fe and Libona. Convinced that the area was rather limited in the light of their hope to expand their pineapple plantation, the PPC officials asked Acting Gov.-Gen. Gilmore for assistance. The governor-general responded positively to the PPC management's request by signing Proclamation No. 230 on 22 April 1929. This proclamation set aside an area of 14,052 hectares of public land in Libona and Santa Fe as the Bukidnon Pineapple Reservation.<sup>44</sup> This legislation, in effect, enabled the PPC to get around legal restrictions on public landholdings imposed by the Philippine public land laws (Organic Act of 1902 and Organic Act of 1916). This violation was repeated when Gov.-Gen. Dwight Davis converted a large tract of public lands west of Maluko into a large U.S. Naval Reservation. From the reservation, the PPC managed to "sub-lease almost 20,000 hectares from the United States Navy."<sup>45</sup> When the entire reservation area was turned over to the Commonwealth Government, the PPC administration was able to retain its earlier sub-leased land as a lease from the National Development Company, an arrangement duly approved by President Quezon. However, only about 3,000 hectares out of the total PPC leased area were fully planted to pineapple by 1935.<sup>46</sup>

Through scientific methods, proper plant spacing, correct fertilizer application, careful soil preparation, and use of insect-and disease-control sprays, pineapple production showed impres-

43. *Ibid.*, p. 846.

44. *Executive Orders and Proclamations issued by the Governor-General During the Year, 1929* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1930), p. 299.

45. Ronald Edgerton, "Frontier Society on the Bukidnon Plateau: 1870-1941," Alfred McCoy and Edilberto de Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982), p. 25.

46. JPCPA, I, p. 87.

sive results. This favorable development guaranteed the construction of a cannery in Bugo, Cagayan de Oro, which began canning pineapple for export in 1930. The PPC's canned pineapple exports from 1930 to 1935 were quite discouraging as prices were seriously affected by the global depression. But when the world-wide economic situation improved, the PPC exported some 277,131 cases of tinned pineapple valued at \$776,000. The largest export on record before the Second World War reached 24,159,389 pounds of pineapple amounting to \$1,672,849.00.<sup>47</sup> These amounts of exported pineapple indicated that the growing of this product had been successful and profitable in Bukidnon during the colonial period. Because of this, the plateau was not only known as a "cattle country" but was also famous as a "pineapple province" of the Philippines.

#### THE BUKIDNONS AND THE CATTLE AND PINEAPPLE INDUSTRIES

There is no doubt that cattle ranching and pineapple raising on the rich Bukidnon plateau during the American colonial period raised the province to the status of being the "cattle country" and "pineapple province" of the Philippines. But it is sad to note that despite these lucrative industries, the Bukidnons never enjoyed any real economic benefits from them. We cannot, perhaps, blame the Americans and some of their Filipino cronies for investing their money to improve the otherwise prostrate economic resources of the province. The error that they committed lies in the fact that out of their tremendous profits, they failed to contribute to the development of Bukidnon and to the welfare of its people.

This may be clearly substantiated by the fact that at the height of the cattle and pineapple industries in 1934, Bukidnon was classified as a poor province with a local income hardly sufficient to meet the salaries of the provincial personnel.<sup>48</sup> It was in this economic status of the province that a plan was afoot in 1934 to subdivide Bukidnon among the neighboring provinces of

47. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1282.

48. "Joseph Lucas to Father Willman, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, July 27, 1934," *Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus*, VIII-10, Folder VIII-10-001 to VIII-10-051, Loyola House of Studies, Manila.

Agusan, Misamis, Davao, Cotabato and Lanao. The plan, however, petered out because of the strong objections interposed by the inhabitants of Bukidnon and by Commissioner Teofisto Guingona, himself a big cattle rancher in Bukidnon. In the absence of hard data at present, these facts give us the impression that both ranching and pineapple production did not contribute to the revenues and coffers of the provincial government.

Moreover, the capitalists' economic enterprises were only subtle ways of preventing the Filipino homesteaders from coming to Bukidnon and owning vacant public lands, as ranchers and American pineapple growers subdivided among themselves the best parts of the plateau. This situation, in effect, diametrically contradicted any attempts at developing the province, because people, not cattle and pineapple are the indispensable agents of development and progress.

If the province of Bukidnon did not profit from the cattle raising and pineapple ventures, neither did the people. In ranching, the Bukidnons' participation was minimal and insignificant. At most, their involvement was limited to that of being cattlemen, paid "a few pesos a month to rope and brand cattle . . . , ride herd," and perform menial personal services to their masters.<sup>49</sup> In brief, they were not cattlemen or cowboys in the real sense of the word, but *muchachos* (servants) of the wealthy *rancheros*. The cattle industry therefore did not alleviate the economic plight of the Bukidnons.

## CONCLUSION

It may be argued that the Americans' move to separate Bukidnon from Misamis to save the Bukidnons from the abuses and exploitation of the coastal businessmen was indeed a laudable decision. However, documentary and circumstantial evidence indicates that such a decision was not without hidden economic motives. The early Americans in Bukidnon were quick to realize the plateau's vast but untapped economic potential, particularly in the areas of cattle ranching and pineapple growing. Thus, the cattle ranching and pineapple raising industries were started, and

49. Edgerton, "Frontier Society," *Philippine Social History*, p. 27.



in the process, metamorphosed into the most profitable economic ventures in Bukidnon prior to the Second World War.

But it must be reiterated here that neither the province nor its inhabitants were directly benefited by such economic activities of the Americans and their Filipino associates. The lucrative cattle raising and pineapple production paradoxically did not mitigate the poverty of the plateau's inhabitants and, in general, did not contribute to the development of Bukidnon for two specific reasons. First, the proceeds of cattle and pineapple production were siphoned out of the province because the ranchers and the pineapple growers spent their money not in Bukidnon but elsewhere in the country and abroad. Second, the very nature of cattle ranching and pineapple growing requires big tracts of land. This prevented Filipino homesteaders from owning and developing idle but fertile lands on the plateau. Worcester was in fact against the idea of subdividing lands in Bukidnon for Filipino landseekers.<sup>50</sup> This, in effect, paralyzed the development of the province because people, not cattle and pineapple, are the indispensable agents of an area's progress and growth.

True it was that the Americans taught the Bukidnon farmers modern ways of rice and corn production with the aim of alleviating the food shortages in the province. This accomplishment was, however, minimal compared to the tremendous economic gains of the Americans and their Filipino friends. It is tempting to state that the food production program that was carried out by the Americans in the province was simply a smokescreen calculated to conceal the colonizer's ultimate economic motives in the area.

50. *Joint Preparatory Committee on Philippine Affairs Report of May 20, 1938*, II, p. 1282.