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## **Maritime Response, 1793-1818**

Francisco Mallari, S.J.

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## The Maritime Response, 1793-1818

FRANCISCO MALLARI, S.J.

An earlier article (*Philippine Studies* 34 [1986]: 257-86) chronicled the Muslim raids in Bicol from 1580-1792. The present article continues the history of those raids up to 1818 and concentrates on the maritime response to the Muslim raiders in the period 1793-1818.

### NEW DEFENSE PATTERNS

A new type of colonial executive assumed command in Manila in 1793. Under the leadership of the new Governor, Army Brigadier Rafael Ma. de Aguilar y Ponce de Leon, an inveterate initiator, the Spanish government formulated for the first time, a sound defense plan on a large scale. Eager to put an end to Muslim raiding, and besieged by innumerable petitions for help, the governor convoked a council of persons knowledgeable in the campaign against Muslim raiding.<sup>1</sup>

One of the reports was presented by the Bishop of Nueva Caceres, Domingo Collantes, O.P., in the form of a Memorial based on his pastoral visit to many of the seaside settlements and towns of Tayabas, Camarines and Albay. These communities, the Bishop wrote, had no arms, no cannons, not a grain of powder, but the inhabitants were ready to purchase them. Their local governments, however, did not have the supply. Notwithstanding their destitution of arms, the amazing thing was they defended themselves

1. Francisco Gainza, *Memoria y antecedentes sobre las expediciones de balangui y jolo* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipografico del Colegio de Santo Tomas, 1851), pp. 32-33.

valiantly against the Muslims who invaded those regions in about 150 *pancos*.<sup>2</sup>

When the Bishop was in the capital of Albay, 50 *pancos* invaded it one night. In spite of their numbers, the Muslims could not land on account of the inhabitants' dispatch in rushing to the beach, each one armed with what he could grab, for their town head had nothing to arm them with. For the protection of the towns of his diocese, the Prelate suggested the lifting of the ban on provincial executives to buy or fabricate weapons, if the *armadillas* or provincial fleets could not offer any help.<sup>3</sup>

It is not clear, if the Bishop's Memorial had any impact on the Governor who adopted the nine-point proposal agreed upon in the last session of 1794. Acting on some of these, he created six divisions of *Marina Sutil*, each one consisting of six *lanchas* and a *panco* which he assigned to the six regional divisions of the archipelago. He stationed the anti-piracy squadrons principally in the waters of the Visayas, Burias, Masbate, Mindoro, Tayabas and Batangas, and while the gunboats were under construction, he negotiated for peace with the sultans of Sulu and Mindanao.<sup>4</sup> Due to the *vintas*' shortcomings and high upkeep amounting to more than ₱1,549,209 from 1778 to 1793, Gov. Aguilar replaced them in 1794 with his *Marina Sutil*. But the followers of the sultans, sometimes with the sultans' consent, observed the truce more in the breach than in practice. Iranun and Camucones raiders ravaged the Visayas and other islands as far as the coast of the Bondoc peninsula which juts out into Ragay Gulf. They burned two places in Camarines: the *visita* of Siruma and the mission of Himoragat, and captured many inhabitants from Daet. Then they raided the defenseless *visita* of Tabgon in Caramoan peninsula

2. Vicente Barrantes, *Guerras piraticas de Filipinas contra mindanaos y joloanos* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1878), pp. 148-49. Nearing the turn of the eighteenth century, the Muslims started using *pancos* in the Bicol seas in place of *joangas*. Though the latter were larger, and therefore, could carry more captives, the *pancos* were faster. By this period, the Muslims needed speed to escape Bicolano fighting ships which were growing in numbers.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Rafael Diaz Arenas, *Memorias historicas y estadisticas de filipinas y particularmente de la grande isla de luzon* (Manila: Imprenta del Diario de Manila, 1850), Cuaderno 14, p. 2. L. Gonzalez Lique, "The Maritime History of the Philippines and the Old Escuela Nautica," *Philippine Magazine* 27 (July 1930): 80. Barrantes, *Guerras*, pp. 155-59. Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia general de filipinas* (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipografico de la Viuda e Hijos de Tello, 1895), 2:370. Miguel A. Espina, *Apuntes para hacer un libro sobre jolo* (Manila: Imprenta y Litografia de M. Perez Hijo, 1888), p. 143.

on September 1795. They assaulted Himoragat again in 1796, killing many inhabitants, but those lucky enough to escape scattered in the fastnesses of Mt. Isarog.<sup>5</sup>

To punish the raiders, the indomitable Jose Gomez, though advanced in age, led his squadron in 1794 and made for Burias and Masbate where he caught up with Muslim pancos. The enemy tried the old dodge of entering a river fringed by cogon-covered banks. Gomez gave chase through one of the branches of the river, and in the most hidden nook of the terrain, came upon a half-burned settlement and the remains of recently wrecked vessels. Suddenly arrows flew through the thick undergrowth, killing one of his soldiers and wounding one sailor. Judging it impossible to fight with invisible enemies, Gomez ordered his men to reembark.<sup>6</sup>

Three years later, there arrived in Manila the most powerful fleet ever seen at that port, under the command of the famous General Don Ignacio Maria de Alava. Gov. Aguilar could have swept the sea of raiders and conquered the southern sultanates with such a naval force had he employed it for that purpose. But it was held in reserve for the rumored British invasion which did not materialize for fear of this fleet. After a fruitless stay in the Philippines, it left for Europe in 1803.<sup>7</sup>

The last time Captain Jose Gomez, the feared scourge of Muslim raiders, cleared Burias and Masbate of Iranun raiders was in 1794. After that date Iranuns reestablished their satellite community in Burias which they used as a springboard for attacks on the Bondoc peninsula, Catanduanes, Capalonga and Mambulao in Camarines and other neighboring islands.

In 1798, some 500 Iranuns in 25 pancos propelled by oars of 800 slaves set out from Burias, ravaged towns on the Pacific coast of Luzon, reduced churches and houses to ashes and captured 450 persons, three of whom were curates, the most sought after booty, for they meant good ransom. Commander Salvador Melendes pursued them as far as Basilan where he inflicted much damage on them. But the year after, twenty-two *joangas* raided sitio Busay in Bulusan, Partido of Sorsogon.<sup>8</sup>

5. Montero, *Historia general*, 2:363, 372. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fol. 17. PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fol. 100.

6. Montero, *Historia general*, 2:371.

7. *Ibid.*, 2:375-76, 380;

8. Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la pirateria malayo-mahometana en mindanao, jolo y borneo* (Madrid: Imprenta y Fundicion de Manuel Tello, 1888), 1:365-66. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fol. 39b.

With the Christian Bicolanos aroused by their curates and guided by improving administrative policies and continuously harried by Muslim raiders, they gradually improvised better ways to fight a common enemy so much so that, by this period, events recorded in Bicolandia showed that the scales were starting to tilt to change the imbalance. The Bicolanos were counter-attacking and organizing themselves for better defense. When a division of raiders in fifty pancos passed through Tabaco Bay in 1796 and plundered Bacacay, an undetermined number of *vintas* commanded by the veteran Pedro Estevan responded to the alarm and caught most of the raiders on land. Estevan destroyed thirty-seven pancos, stranding about 200 raiders who perished from hunger and other deprivations.<sup>9</sup>

The pressure brought to bear upon Muslim raiding by Gov. Aguilar's relentless operation, and, perhaps, foreign intervention in the south, diminished the raids in most regions including Bicolandia. But this man of impeccable taste in clothes and cuisine felt disturbed by occasional reports of depredations that ruffled his plans. To come upon more efficacious measures, he convened another council in 1798, a propensity he would be faulted with at the end of his regime. From the recommendations submitted and the subsequent instructions sent to provincial and local heads, two factors emerged: first, the parish priests were vested with an overseer's authority over the defense resources of their town, an implicit condemnation of the *Alcaldes'* self-enriching practices;<sup>10</sup> and second, each locality must look after its own defense.

On 28 January 1799, the Manila government sent an order in the nature of an enquiry to town heads. In response, each town in Albay held its junta or council consisting of *principales*, *cabezas de barangay* and towns-people, presided over by the *gobernadorcillo*, in the presence of the parish priest, to propose necessary measures to pursue and check Muslim hostilities. One visita and twenty-seven towns submitted the proceedings of their juntas which dealt with the main points of enquiry. Their first proposal was the construction of armed vessels.<sup>11</sup>

9. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 279b, 283b.

10. Montero, *Historia general*, 2:505.

11. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fols. 2-56b.

## CONSTRUCTION OF ARMED VESSELS

Twenty Albay towns each proposed to construct for defense an armed vessel in the category of a *panco* or *parao* or *lancha* or *vinta*, according to the town's need and funding viability. The three towns of Bulusan, Gubat and Casiguran — all close to San Bernardino Strait which was the entrance of traders and raiders to the eastern coast — would each construct two or more. Lagonoy needed a number of *vintas* but poverty constrained that secluded town to build only one. The town of Sorsogon decided that its two vessels in service, a *vinta* and a *falua*, each armed with four cannons (two two-pounders and two one-pounders), half a dozen muskets and crew's bladed weapons were sufficient; so did Bato, Catanduanes, which had a *parao* in service. But Tabgon and Caramoan, two small towns whose populations were reduced by migration and Muslims, expressed dejection over their inability to provide crews. Being coastal or riverine towns, many inhabitants of these Albay towns owned boats either for fishing or trading. But the private *paraos* were not large enough to be armed with guns heavier than a half-pounder. The communal *parao* could carry only a two-pounder falconet.<sup>12</sup>

The dimensions of the vessels and armaments to be installed were specified including the size of the crew which varied from twenty to thirty men per vessel. The town was to shoulder the cost of construction and outfitting which would mostly be met by asking the inhabitants to contribute labor, boat lumber, caulking pitch, iron, wax and other accessories. Extremely generous and civic-minded citizens were not wanting, like Don Agustin Camposano of Casiguran, who underwrote an entire gunboat.

As an incentive to the crew, the towns endorsed the accepted practice in Camarines of granting a ration of palay, varying from a weekly five *gantas* to a monthly one *cavan* per person while on board, and exemptions from tribute, *corvee* labor and personal services for themselves and for their wives if married. They were, however, to take with them on board their own hand-held weapons.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, these exemptions would redound to losses

12. In the nineteenth century, the cost of building and maintaining a *falua* amounted to ₱92, 7 *reales* and 6 *granos*. PNA EP-S 1848-1882, fol. 99. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fols. 2-56b.

13. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fol. 8. PNA VP-A, vol. 11, fols. 2-9.

of the Royal Treasury, the officials and the parish priests. Two towns, therefore, called attention to the useless and fattened "multitude of Spanish mestizos" numbering more than 300 persons of both sexes in Malinao and "fraternity of Spanish mestizos" numbering 30 persons of both sexes in Tabaco who enjoyed these exemptions. Tabaco judiciously recommended that these "drifters and jobless" good-for-nothings be assigned to the navy in place of the tribute payers.<sup>14</sup>

In the choice of the crew, a premium was put on valor. In addition, Casiguran wanted them vaccinated. From observation of the men recommended as ship skippers, the towns expected from them valor, good conduct, intelligence and knowledge of navigation. In this regard, the hierarchy of Bicolano social values at that time is most revealing: almost always, a principal was picked for the post.

#### THE CONCERNED GOVERNOR

The decline in Muslim incursions was a much-needed respite for the much-punished pueblos, but for the unfortunate victims of sporadic raids from 1806 to 1815 it did not make much difference. Though the Iranuns concentrated their harassment only on coasting vessels and isolated settlements to take more captives, that in no way denoted a radical diminution of Muslim presence in Bicolandia. The new Governor General, Mariano Fernandez Folgueras, though obsessed like his predecessor with the belief of an impending second British attack on Manila, was not unmindful of that fact. No sooner was he sworn in, in 1806, than he took action on Albay's clamor for arms in 1799 and dispatched 100 muskets to that province. But just as in the past, Albay towns lost most of their firearms through an alcalde's questionable actuation, they lost these weapons again through another alcalde's misfortune.<sup>15</sup>

Alcalde Domingo Navea's coasting vessel, escorted by his galley, was returning from Manila with the 100 muskets and other implements for Albay, when 40 Iranun pancos captured, on 16 November, the coasting vessel whose ship master, Santiago Endaya,

14. PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fols. 27, 30.

15. All information in this paragraph and subsequent paragraphs, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1799-1864, vol. 2, fols. 107-107b, 114.

offered no resistance. What the escort vessel did was not reported except that it was lost sight of at Punta Arenas. Then the raiders sailed to Sorsogon and blockaded its port.

On 18 November, the separated escort vessel rode out a strong typhoon, heaved to at Pasacao and on the twenty-fourth was seized by the same pancos at the estuary of Bagatao island. But its ship master, Domingo Amador put up a vigorous defense and surrendered only after losing an arm, eight men killed and the rest wounded. The enemy looted and destroyed the galley, then left it adrift. Two days later, it was salvaged by the people of San Jacinto, Ticao island, washed in blood with six cadavers in its hold. On the same day, the fishermen of Juban reported the capture of another large coasting vessel at the estuary of Bagatao.

Writing to Governor Folgueras from Albay town on the twenty-third Navea, the alcalde-trader, seemed hell bent on leading his people to search and destroy the raiders. For all his huff and puff, however, his real motives were open to question. His patriotism had never surfaced until the reversal of his business fortunes.

#### THE "PIRATE WIND" BRINGS RAIDERS

As if to demonstrate their mastery of the Bicol waters, the Muslims shifted at will their methodical operations from the southwestern to the eastern seas. It was the season of the "pirate wind" or southwest monsoon when pillaging pancos spread their sails to catch the southwesterlies to be on time for the trading and harvesting season in Christian communities. With the initiative on their side, they picked their targets with ease and attacked at their convenience with impunity. Reports of raids and sighting soon reached authorities. Acting on information given by *balateros* or gatherers of sea slugs who barely escaped capture in Albay gulf, the decorated terror of Muslim raiders, Pedro Estevan, dispatched his officers, Bernardo Hantelman and Jose Blanco, who sighted suspicious ships on 26 October 1816, in the hazy glow of early morning. At the shout of "Moros" from the lead vessel, the Albay squadron opened fire, engaged the raiders and destroyed thirty-two pancos.<sup>16</sup>

16. Montero, *Historia de la pirateria*, 1:373. Emilio Bernaldez y Fernandez de Folgueras, *Reseña historica de la guerra al sur de filipinas, sostenida por las armas*

The reports of increased sightings received further first-hand confirmation on 17 June 1818. After two months of active duty, the division of gunboats of Camarines docked for repairs in an undisclosed place. On board was a boy from Catanduanes who had escaped from his Muslim captors at Sisiran Bay in Caramoan peninsula. He had counted twenty-five pancos which he said were attempting a crossing to the town of Talisay in upper Camarines.<sup>17</sup>

The boy's captors appeared to be just one of the undetermined fleets of raiders in Bicol waters. What was certain was the death and destruction left in their wake along the eastern coast. To make matters worse, on 27 June, an unidentified frigate flying a Dutch flag was sighted cruising from Rapo-rapo Island towards the Strait. Thirty-nine pancos were also spotted in the same vicinity which boded ill for the eastern coast.

Raiders struck hard on 2 July. There is no way of telling whether they were the thirty-nine pancos referred to, but led by Datu Amayloco and Datu Caratao, after being repulsed by a stout defense at Palanas, Masbate, they proceeded to the island of Capul near Samar where they bartered some captives for palay, entered the Strait, cruised towards Rapo-rapo, then encountered the two large well-armed paraos of Tabaco and Tiwi which were stationed at that point to support the *Dolores*, the King's falua. After a three-hour hard-fought engagement, the raiders succeeded in overturning the two paraos, killed their skippers, including five crewmen, and captured the rest of the crew.<sup>18</sup>

Leaving Rapo-rapo after a number of days in that island, the raiders set their course for Camarines. At the crack of dawn, they stormed Sangay in Camarines, plundered the town-proper, laid waste what was valuable, burned down the church and the town hall, carried off eighty-four captives and whatever palay the people had.<sup>19</sup>

*españolas contra los piratas de aquel archipiélago, desde la conquista hasta nuestros días* (Madrid: Imprenta del Memorial de Ingenieros, 1857), p. 140.

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

18. The account is taken from the testimony of Alejandro Suzara, a captive on board Datu Caratao's panco. He was taken captive when, on May 1818, the *lancha* skippered by his father, Anacleto, was seized by Datu Amayloco's raiding fleet close to the Bondoc peninsula, Tayabas. He was liberated after the October 1818 battle. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, 256-256b, 312-312b.

19. *Ibid.*, fols. 256b, 312b.

They sailed on to the opposite coast of Caramoan. Past the small bay of Pitogo, they came upon the gunboat of Bato, Catanduanes and the armed parao of Calolbon, Catanduanes both assigned to secure the southern end of Maqueda channel between Caramoan peninsula and Sialat point. Both vessels were apparently far from their assigned zone of responsibility. The encounter around eight in the morning was suspenseful. Blustery winds of the southwest monsoon were whipping the waters. Suddenly at the starboard flank of the two Catanduanes vessels loomed the swollen sails of a raiding fleet bearing down on them with oar blades cutting the sea. For better range, the Bato gunboat allowed the lead panco to come closer, then fired its four-pounder, splitting apart its own bow. As the sea rushed in, boarding parties poured in. Waist deep in water, the undaunted crew hacked for dear life. Finally overwhelmed, the gallant gunboat sank in shallow water, five *varas* deep. Only four Catandueños survived and were taken prisoners. Under cover of darkness, one escaped to tell this story.<sup>20</sup>

Like its sister ship, the Calolbon parao gave a good account of itself. But pressed on all sides by a multitude of vessels like vultures and Muslims swarming on its outriggers and frameworks, the parao took on water, awash both fore and aft. Against odds, the courageous crew fought on, performing heroic feats, though half-submerged in water. At last, exhausted, some killed and others badly wounded, the men of Catanduanes had to surrender.

Like added salt to the wound, the Commissioner of Catanduanes, Basilio del Barrio, reported that the ill-fated parao was carrying the royal revenues. Worse yet, the Muslims had landed in Catanduanes. Unintimidated, the warlike folk fought them fiercely and well but could not completely subdue the numerically superior raiders. Some Muslims made good their escape by shoving out to sea and clambering aboard undamaged pancos.

Foreseeing grimmer days ahead, the embattled Alcalde Mayor Tiburcio Goroztiza gave DelBarrio instructions, among others, to exert efforts in order to vouch for the lost "armament, powder

20. Suzara confirmed the courageous defense of the gunboat but the Catandueño, escapee seemed to imply that the combat occurred at night-time, not early morning. All information in this paragraph and subsequent paragraphs, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 187-188, 190-193, 195-195b, 200-200b, 253-255b, 312-313.

and munitions" and number of casualties; shore up the defenses of every town, search for the lost gunboat and salvage its guns, if the enemy had not yet taken them.

Reacting on 25 August 1818 to Alcalde Goroztiza's report, Governor Folgueras did not like the loss of the gunboat and the *parao*. He thought it a foolhardy venture to fight twenty-two enemy vessels. They ought to have avoided combat or fled.

Due to our document's damaged folio, it is hard to say what Datus Amayloco and Caratao did next. They seemed to have ranged through the northern waters up to Baler, Tayabas where their fleet stayed in a river for a week of careening.

Meanwhile, answering Alcalde Goroztiza and Lt. Jose Blanco's call for help, Ensign Jose Tirado, the commanding officer of the division of gunboats at Palapag, Samar, made sail for Albay with his squadron. But a few days of reconnoitering on the stormy seas of Albay did not yield a trace of either the frigate or the *pancos*. After conferring with Goroztiza on the deployment of Albay's fleet, he departed for his station.

In spite of the negative results of Tirado's mission, Goroztiza entertained a strong hunch that enemy *pancos* infested the eastern seas. Albay gulf then was being referred to as Moro gulf. In fact, by the end of July, more than seventy *pancos* armed with heavy caliber cannons would have sailed past Gubat.

To clear Albay seas of the enemy, on 16 July, Goroztiza sent out the division of gunboats from Gubat under the command of Pedro Estevan and his deputy, Jose Blanco. Estevan was on a search and destroy mission. He combed the seas off Rapo-rapo, Batan, San Miguel island and Lagonoy bay, dropped anchor at Tabaco on 22 July and headed for the opposite coast of Caramoan the day after.

In the last week of July, enemy sightings were reported. Antonio Inocencio, commanding a *falua*, followed three Muslim *pancos* a little past midnight from Bulan to Matnog, and about two hours past, encountered twelve others making for the Naranjos. After a brief exchange of fire, he broke off, knowing too well the disadvantage of his *falua* against twelve *pancos*.

The Commanders of the division of gunboats relayed a message to Goroztiza that more than forty *pancos*, chased by the Camarines gunboats and the schooner *Mosca* were fleeing. They could

do damage to littoral Albay settlements, while he was in Sorsogon, worrying and fretting to go to the capital. The eastern seas were boiling with unusual enemy activity, and the capital would be the most convenient place where he, the War Captain of the province, could direct operations. He left Sorsogon, taking advantage of the departure of Tabaco's gunboat in the morning but reached the capital in the afternoon of the next day on a small *baroto*, though he was all set to take the falua *San Rafael* which unfortunately got entangled in a firefight with twelve pancos it had run into in Bujatan bay.<sup>21</sup>

To further reenforce his forces, Goroztiza asked Andres de Miranda (most likely the Commander of the naval squadron at the Strait), on 29 July, to send him the two faluas of the King which were employed against contrabandits but were idly at anchor in Bulan, so that together with the falua *San Rafael*, they could form a hunter-killer group.

Very restive about the rising threat of Muslim raiders, especially after the loss of the Bato gunboat and the three paraos, Goroztiza made his mind known to his officers, Estevan and Blanco. He said the pancos under pursuit by the Camarines squadron would withdraw and try to defend themselves vigorously. For no reason at all, he cautioned the two officers, should the gunboats separate or retire, so as not to weaken the fleet. To give them a formidable striking power, Goroztiza earlier arranged with Commissioner del Barrio for the rapid deployment of the gunboats of Bagamanoc and Virac and their affiliation to the division under Estevan's or Blanco's command. Eager to avenge the sinking of the parao, Tabaco's gunboat would also set out together with the King's falua. He reminded them further to observe order and caution in sailing. He forbade them to dally longer than necessary in anchorages. And he let it be known that he would report to the Captain General for just punishment the Commanders who would not comply with orders while he would recommend for reward those who would distinguish themselves.

The care-worn province executive did not stay put in the capital. One time he was in Sorsogon, the next in Bacon, then back to the capital, organizing defenses and inquiring after his

21. All information in this paragraph and subsequent paragraphs, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 189, 190b, 194, 195-195b, 200b-201.

people's well-being. Reporting on 1 August to Governor Folgueras, the hard-working Alcalde rightfully claimed, "I do not spare toil or fatigue in compliance with my duty." Over-optimistic always, he expressed hope that if the gunboat Commanders would work efficiently, the enemy would be driven away or beaten, for he would shortly have a fleet of twelve armed vessels, five of them with twelve-pounders. Governor Folgueras wrote back, approving his measures.

#### GOVERNOR FOLGUERAS TAKES A HAND

In the meantime, the story of the escaped captive boy at Sisiran bay was verified. His captors clawed their way out of the mazy channels of the Quinalasag and Lamit islands group, rounded Butauanan island, climbed to upper Camarines, stormed Talisay and Indan (now Vinzons). The Muslims descended on the second town with ferocity. But Indan and other towns were no longer easy pickings as in the past when the mere mention of the word 'Moro' was enough for the towns to be left deserted. The inhabitants responded in kind. Armed only with arrows and about three or four muskets, they resolutely and dauntlessly stood up to the enemy toe to toe. But their big heart was not enough. Enemy superiority in numbers and arms took the day. Left to them was 'the sad spectacle of seeing their houses reduced to ashes, their fields devastated, some townmates dead, wounded and captured.'<sup>22</sup>

Beyond expectation, although plundered and razed and the raiders in possession of its territory, Indan had not yet fallen by 7 August 1818. The inhabitants who were unable to flee sought refuge in the church where they were bottled up but stubbornly resisted. Alcalde Iñigo Gonzales de Azaola pleaded with Alcalde Goroztiza for help, proposing the immediate dispatch of Albay's gunboats which were posted on the opposite coast of Caramoan, to succor his besieged people. Though willing to respond to his colleague's call, Goroztiza did not dare abandon that coast, for he strongly suspected that the fleet of thirty-one pancos then anchored at the port of Magdalena in Masbate, a very fine harbor and favorite rendezvous of raiders, would enter the Strait and

22. MN Ms. 1666, documento 19, fol. 40v. PNA EP-CS 1797-1855, fol. 153.

subject the exposed coastal towns of Albay to the same fate as Indan.<sup>23</sup> That was a short-sighted strategy. He ignored an immediate necessity in favor of a remote possibility. At the fall of Indan, the raiders would have continued their slave-raiding in other towns down to Libmanan had not the Camarines gunboats and the schooner *Mosca* doggedly pursued them and forced them to run for the Strait.<sup>24</sup>

Fearing a repetition of the 1754 horrors, the beaten but unbowed Camarines Bicolanos clamored for arms. Hearing their pleas, Governor Folgueras responded with words. He advised Alcalde Azaola "to regulate the number of muskets, pistols, bladed weapons and others which are necessary" to build up good defenses for his towns especially those regularly threatened by Muslims. He suggested the creation of a corps of local militia in every town to upgrade the defenses.<sup>25</sup> He wanted the strongest of the young to be chosen and instructed in the use of arms and appropriate tactics. Since the Muslims were feared for their prowess in wielding bladed weapons, it would be advisable when they land, spoiling for plunder, to interdict them with cavalry. They might be armed with muskets, but they would be helpless, the Governor guaranteed, because of their ignorance of military tactics. For the cavalry, the locals could be recruited as long as they would have a good horse and be supplied with the necessary arms. To keep the men in service and in fighting form, he said there should be fitting incentives, and they should be ready for combat at a moment's notice.<sup>26</sup>

The Governor gave the Alcalde much leeway in proposing defense measures to his threatened towns. He could choose to establish *castillos* or *baluartes* with the corresponding arms and

23. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 222, 224. PNL HDP Masbate No. 58, p. 2.

24. This running battle is recorded in the daily entries of the schooner *Mosca* and the separate account of its skipper, Rodrigo Mauricio Huilson. PNA EP-CS 1797-1855, fols. 154, 207-207b, 217-219b.

25. In 1827 Emilio Bernaldez mentioned the importance of the militia troops in checking Muslim raiding yet they have been neglected. He recommended their affiliation to the regular army with the same pay and with European officers. Emma Blair and James A. Robertson, eds. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1893* (Cleveland: Arthur A. Clarke, 1903), 51:189.

26. Folgueras would not have recommended the formation of cavalry, if he were ever in Bicol. Antonio de Siguenza, a captain who saw much of Bicolandia and was once a provincial executive of Camarines Norte, did not see any suitable place in the south of 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. 438-439.

complement of skillful men to man them and with incentives for good service; he should follow the conditions laid down. As to captured Muslims, the Governor did not want them hanged at the beach but sent to Manila for perpetual consignment to the galleys.<sup>27</sup>

#### FALUAS VERSUS PANCOS

With the lanchas and faluas of Camarines and Albay, the schooner *Mosca* and the attached anti-contraband faluas of the King and the Tobacco Revenue patrolling the eastern waters and pursuing the raiders, one would expect substantial gains against the Muslims. It appears, however, that the only vessel of the fleet that had done any damage at all to the raiders was the *Mosca*.

The action occurred at 6:00 in the morning of 21 July 1818. While navigating out of the Canimo channel, the *Mosca* and the Camarines lanchas sighted thirty-six pancos moving out of Daet bay in full sail, apparently heading past Canimo island. Clear of the shoals, the *Mosca* ordered full sail at 8:30 and signalled the entire squadron for "general attack." The enemy fled at full speed, all oars flailing. Because of its superior speed, forty-five minutes later, the *Mosca* was the closest to the fleeing enemy. Though still at a considerable range, its skipper, Rodrigo Mauricio Huilson, gave the order to commence firing. At the third round, a six-pound shot landed amidship the hindermost panco. Unfortunately, what happened to the panco is forever lost to history in the damaged part of this folio.<sup>28</sup>

What seem to have been the constraints to a successful execution and realization of Albay and Camarines' anti-piracy Campaign? The most immediate was the inability of the faluas and lanchas to catch up with the Muslim pancos. Gleaned from eyewitness accounts of escaped captives and sea captains, the panco was a light, swift, maneuverable vessel of wooden ribs and planks, topped by bamboo and nipa awning, caulked with husks and bound with rattan. From bow to stern, it measured eighty to ninety feet and, at midsection, had a hull width of eighteen to twenty feet. Propelled by a sail of *petate* or rush-matting hoisted on a bamboo tripod mast and two tiers of thirty to forty slave

27. PNA EP-CS 1797-1855, fol. 154.

28. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fol. 206b.

rowers (up to sixty in large ones), it could make seven to eight knots by oar power alone, sail against cross currents and skid in the shallows, for it carried no ballast and drew only three to five feet of water. Depending on its size, it was manned by thirty to fifty men or ninety to over a hundred. It was equipped for marauding missions with muskets, *sombilines*, bladed weapons and cannons of which the light calibered were mounted on slings, and the heavy in the bow behind a balk of thick timber.<sup>29</sup>

A swift sailer, like the *panco*, would certainly leave the lumbering *faluas* and *lanchas* in its wake. Compared to the *panco*, the *falua* measured only some fifty-five to sixty feet long. It was rigged with triangular sails attached to a long spar hoisted obliquely from a mast, rowed by fourteen oars, armed with light guns at the mid and aft sections and a heavy-caliber cannon in the bow mounted on thick blocks of hard wood. Generally, both *falua* and *lancha* displaced four to six feet of water, made six knots in a quarter wind, hardly three knots by oars, and stalled in strong tide rips. It was perhaps for its sluggishness that Robert McMicking called the *falua* a heavy sailing boat though it was smaller than the *panco*.<sup>30</sup>

By 1818 in spite of the Bicolanos' provincial fleets, the Muslims were still in control of Bicol seas. But since the formation of their provincial fleets, the Bicolanos had been aggressively eager for a bow to bow confrontation; nevertheless the Muslims' edge in

29. PNA Piratas, 1:1, 3, 10; 2:4-4b, 17; 3:1b, 6. PNA EPS 1749-1848, fols. 137-137b. Santiago Patero, *Sistema que conviene adoptar para acabar con la pirateria* (Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1872), p. 7. Patero was a navy Commander who was in the Philippines for ten years and fought in the "Moro Wars." Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of HMS Dido for the Suppression of Piracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846), pp. 122-23. Keppel was a Captain of the British Royal Navy. Thomas Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea & the Moluccas, from Balambangan* (London: G. Scott, 1779), p. 228. Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition in Travel Accounts of the Islands, 1832-1858* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1974), p. 104. Bernaldez, *Reseña*, pp. 42-43.

30. One of the testimonies from Bicolandia on the *panco*'s speed was given by Ensign Jose Tirado of the Royal Navy who sailed to Albay on July 1818 to help clear the seas of Muslims. With three *faluas*, he chased a *panco* at noon sailing towards Rapo-rapo; by 3:00 in the afternoon, he lost sight of it "as was always the case in pursuing the said *panco*." PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 255-255b. An escaped captive, Pedro Golo, a native of Bulan, also mentioned the speed of Muslim vessels. PNA Piratas, 2:4b. Robert McMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines*, Morton J. Netzorg, ed. (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1967), p. 259; James F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898* (Singapore University Press, 1981), p. 173; Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine*, 29:97.

speed, maneuverability and tactics often thwarted them.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the Muslims generally avoided an encounter, if they could help it. Their foremost preoccupation was to take home their booty safely, especially human captives, which were converted into power and wealth in their sultanate.<sup>32</sup>

So precious were human captives that they were placed under the most severe security precautions, according to sworn statements of former captives. Lopes Erecto, a resident of Masbate, who was captured by the Balangingi raiders while planting *camote* in his visita of Natinbunan said that, at night, with the exception of women, they were tied by the neck, including their hands and feet, but freed in the daytime and made to row after their wounds were healed. Pedro Golo, an escaped captive from Bulan, had another experience with the Balangingi. When nearing a coast, they were tied by the neck to the vessel's crossbars. On arrival at Moroland, they were under a master who sold each one of them for 100 measures of palay, a hundred measures equalling 10 gantas.<sup>33</sup>

Notwithstanding the high risk involved, captives were known to have made a desperate bid for freedom. After his capture, Francisco Paulino tried to jump overboard but was recaptured. The Muslims tied him and, with a bolo, they tore out all his teeth for having gnawed the cord that bound him.<sup>34</sup>

To evade combat or escape from pursuers, the Muslims took advantage of their vessels' shallow draft by heaving into reefy shallows where the deep-draft gunboats could not follow, or they entered esteros, struck their mast and hid behind thick foliage or mangrove growth or among rocks and islets. If cornered, they either fought with daring and determination or hurled them-

31. Jagor briefly mentioned Muslim tactics. On his visit to Legazpi, he said the Commander of the *faluas* gave chase to two pirate vessels but then six others appeared and maneuvered to cut off his retreat, thus he hurried to go back. F. Jagor, *Viajes por filipinas*, trad. del Aleman por Sebastian Vidal y Soler (Madrid: Aribau y Cia, 1875), p. 192).

32. The following sources spoke of the value of captives to the Muslims: Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963), p. 84; Forrest, *A Voyage*, p. 227; Wilkes, *A Narrative*, pp. 160-61, 103; Agustín Santayana, *La Isla de Mindanao* (Madrid: Imprenta de Alhambra y Comp., 1862), 107-8; Montero, *Historia de la piratería*, 1:70, 72; Melvin Mednick, "Some Problems of Moro History and Political Organization," *Philippines Sociological Review* 5 (January 1957): 48-49; R. F. Wendover, "The Balangingi Pirates," *Philippine Magazine* 38 (August 1941): 323.

33. PNA Piratas 2, fols. 2b-3, 5b-7b.

34. PNA EP-S 1749-1848, fols. 137-137b.

selves into the water, swam ashore, hid in the bush, and when the pursuers were gone, they built new boats and took to raiding again.<sup>35</sup>

#### ALCALDE GOROZTIZA'S BATTLE ORDERS

With his seemingly futile campaign in spite of the resources at his command, Goroztiza realized that to defeat the Muslims, an intelligent person should direct operations. On 31 August 1818, he petitioned Ensign Jose Tirado to leave his post in Palapag, Samar and come to Bacon to take command of the maritime forces.<sup>36</sup>

Tirado was willing to come but could not. To help Goroztiza, he decided to send Gregorio Salgueyro with the two lanchas and King's falua as soon as the strong southwestern storms subsided. With the remaining two lanchas and two faluas owned by Fr. Jose de la Mata, he told Goroztiza, he would defend his position, if the Muslims driven by the combined forces of Salgueyro and Goroztiza would flee towards his position.

Never wanting in initiative and buoyed by the belief that problems are soluble, Goroztiza made do with the resources on hand. He commissioned the skipper of the *Mosca*, Rodrigo Mauricio Huilson, over-all Commander of the lanchas and faluas, in partnership with Pedro Estevan who was called out of retirement and, therefore handicapped by his advanced age to command alone such a big number of war vessels. He issued battle orders of overriding importance for the new Commander along these lines: Proceed to the opposite coast of Caramoan peninsula. After ascertaining the whereabouts of the fifty pancos which were last seen in Baji, at the coast of Sisiran Bay, 16 August, different groups under different captains should take up their assigned positions at the channel between the islands of Canimo and Colasi point to impede passage or cut off the retreat of the Muslims. At night, do not fire cannons for any reason. It would give away your position and waste the King's powder. Black out all lights and avoid excessive shouting. Devise a signal system for relaying com-

35. Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine*, 51:196-97; Forrest, *A Voyage*, p. 302. Montero, *Historia de la pirateria*, 1:74, 75.

36. All information in this paragraph and subsequent paragraphs, unless otherwise indicated, were taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 217-218b, 219-219b, 222-223, 224b, 228-229b, 232-234.

mands and keeping ships together while under sail. Arrest anyone who disobeys orders and leave him at the nearest pueblo. Treat the officers and men with the utmost moderation so that they would pursue the enemy with more zeal. Officers and men who perform deeds worthy of remuneration would be recommended to the Captain General. When the vessels are at anchor, conduct an inspection every night to see if proper watch is kept in each vessel. In case of negligence, reprimand the captains, and at the next offense, arrest them so that they would learn. When all the vessels are assembled together, these instructions should be read aloud.

Ironically, these battle orders brought down a reprimand on Goroztiza, the author, and on Huilson, the executor, from Governor Folgueras who, till then, had been writing favorable reactions to Goroztiza's situation reports. The reprimand developed this way. Complying with Goroztiza's orders, Huilson left Sorsogon on board the schooner *Mosca* for Bacon where he organized his flotilla of six ships. On 21 August, he headed posthaste to merge with Pedro Estevan's lanchas at the port of Guila in Caramoan peninsula. On his arrival two days later, Estevan told him there were no Muslims in Baji or any place nearby, for they were still at the river of Indan and had not left after sacking that town. Obeying his orders to pursue the Muslims as far as the province of Camarines, Huilson left early the next morning with four faluas, crossed over to Pandan, Catanduanes; sailed northwest till the island of Butauanan, and cruised close to the coast, making inquiries about the Muslims until he reached Mauban, Tayabas where he was informed that the Muslims had plowed the seas towards the island of Polillo. He planned to leave the next morning to do battle with the enemy. But the shortage of ship stores held him up. There was no rice in Mauban or "in the entire province of Tayabas" (obviously an exaggeration), wrote the disgusted Huilson. Unless he could get rice in Polillo or Nueva Ecija, he would have the bitter lot of returning to Camarines or Albay, he told Governor Folgueras in the letter he scribbled aboard his flagship *Mosca* riding at anchor in Mauban.

There seems to be no reason why Huilson wrote to the Governor. It led to his undoing. The very day Folgueras received the letter, he wrote back, apoplectic, in no uncertain terms, because of the violation of his orders. He had sent Huilson and *Mosca* to Sorsogon from where he ought to return promptly to Manila in convoy with the brig *Felix*. Folgueras ordered him to sail

immediately to Sorsogon and come to Manila with the brig.

Goroztiza's turn came next. In clear-cut language the Governor rebuked him for having sent Huilson to faraway Camarines and Tayabas. Folgueras fumed against the two and held each one responsible for the consequences.

#### THE BATTLE OF TABGON BAY

Contrary to Folgueras' fears, the consequences were extremely rewarding. From Huilson's combat reconnaissance, the armadilla in Caramoan waters learned of the whereabouts of a large raiding fleet and, therefore, kept vigil for raiders along the Caramoan coast and their eventual passage to Albay waters and the Strait. One is also tempted to speculate if the results of the approaching battle could have been otherwise, were it not for Goroztiza's and Huilson's overzealousness.

From subsequent events, it is quite clear that the Muslims in Polillo island were the merged forces of Prince Nune, a son of a Mindanao Sultan, Datu Amayloco and Datu Caratao. We last saw the two datus in Baler, Tayabas, on July 1818, where they careened their vessels for a week and proceeded to sack Casiguran and Binangonan. But for lack of sources, it is not easy to trace their course from August till the last half of October.

Fearful of foul weather, for the season of squally northerlies could start anytime in October or November, the merged raiding fleet decided to return to the opposite coast of Caramoan. Its travel-worn pancos, gluttled with loot and captives, swung into Tagun Bay, and on 26 October 1818, before the break of day, landed on the lonely beach of Tabgon in Caramoan peninsula.<sup>37</sup> Dark forms brandishing naked blades leaped from the boats, fell upon the hapless visita and went about plundering its cultivated fields.

As the eastern sky above Haponan island began to light up, five gray hulls silently closed in on the unsuspecting pancos. Long inured to impunity, not a cry of alarm from a lookout rang out. Most of the Muslims were on land, foraging for loot and hunting for captives. The greatly desired confrontation for Goroztiza and his Commanders and every avenging Bicolano finally came into

37. *Ibid.*, fol. 335.

reality. Long held in mockery by the speedy panco, the slow sailing faluas and lanchas caught up with their elusive prey at last.

At six o' clock a cannon shot from the head falua owned by Don Pedro Alvarez of Casiguran, Sorsogon and skippered by Bernardo Hantelman roared in the early morning air. Then shots from big and small-bore guns from the five lanchas of Pedro Estevan's division erupted.

From the top of a mountain north of Caramoan town, more or less a league from the scene of combat, Clemente de la Torre, *Teniente Mayor* of Caramoan, watched the naval battle from 6:00 in the morning till nightfall while Alejandro Suzara who was in the midst of the struggle saw the naval encounter from Datu Caratao's panco where he was a captive. Their accounts serve as sources.<sup>38</sup>

From a distance, Estevan's lanchas put up a continous cannonade against a massed fleet of forty partially-manned pancos.<sup>39</sup> Of the five ships, Hantelman's falua fought the hardest and almost single-handed. As it had a shallower draft than the four lanchas, it came closest to the enemy and, from short range, with its disciplined crew and good fire control, did the most damage and captured nine pancos while the four lanchas lent supporting fire and acted as a blocking force. Being the nearest, the falua drew the most intense fire from the enemy. About sixty badly aimed shots missed it, a sign that the Muslims never recovered from the initial surprise, and a confirmation of their lack of dexterity in handling firearms. Paying high honor to the falua's feat, Estevan said, ". . . the action would have been much more glorious, if there had been faluas like Casiguran's . . ." <sup>40</sup> It was a vindication of the much impugned falua whose usefulness was often questioned.<sup>41</sup>

38. *Ibid.*, fols. 308, 313-14. In his report to *Alcalde Mayor* Azaola, the parish priest of Lagonoy who was very probably not an eyewitness has another version of the battle. Fols. 334-334b.

39. When Datu Amayloco captured the Suzaras near the Bondoc peninsula in May, his fleet was originally composed of 17 pancos before the merger with Prince Nune. *Ibid.*, fols. 312, 350.

40. *Ibid.*, fols. 297; Estevan's account of the battle is in fols. 300-300b; Gervasio Gonzalez, skipper of a gunboat, could not give the number of shots his vessel fired, which is understandable, for it started firing very early in the morning and continued till 5:00 in the afternoon. Fols. 301, 340b.

41. As late as 1826 and 1845, faluas and lanchas were downgraded. In reply to the Governor General's offer in 1826 of faluas and lanchas for the defense of Panay and Calamianes coasts, Fray Gregorio Rodriguez, the Augustinian Provincial, said these vessels had not accomplished anything to stop the Muslims. Montero, *Historia general*, 2:500. In 1845, Francisco Enriquez, *Alcalde Mayor* of Camarines, complained of the faluas' inability to produce even an "ear" of a Muslim. PNA EP-CS 1781-1883, fol. 446b.

In Bicolandia, before 1818, there was never a naval battle like Tabgon's. The casualties were relatively high. More than 500 Muslims were killed, "not counting others who jumped overboard and [died] when the falua fired at them. . ." One of those who jumped was Alejandro Suzara himself who was on board Datu Caratao's panco. The datu himself abandoned his own panco and his women and swam to a small panco. Some Muslims reembarked on Caratao's panco to flee but they were very few. In that paralyzing panic, Suzara and many other captives dashed for freedom. At least 500 Muslims fled to the mountains, and about the same number perished in the 10 pancos that were sunk. To get an idea of the casualties in those pancos, the panco *Matilat* carried more than 100 Muslims and captives, plus artillery; and the others, as a rule, not less than 50 persons each.<sup>42</sup>

With only five ships in his command, Estevan could not contain the more numerous enemy from escaping. Hantelman's falua ceased firing at 4:00 in the afternoon while Gervasio Gonzalez's ship and the rest at five o'clock. Hantelman strongly believed that the remaining pancos could have been captured had they given chase, for the fleeing enemy ships had much decimated crews. They could have been scythed down, Deputy Commander Jose Blanco declared, if Estevan were not very old and had agreed to continue harassing them, for the Muslims lacked rowers. For, contrary to Muslim usage, the raiders obliged the female captives to ply the oars. Goroztiza thought otherwise. He said not one of the pancos could have escaped, if the skippers of the lanchas of Catanduanes and Tabaco were intelligent officers.<sup>43</sup>

All three assessments failed to give allowance to their fighting men's shortcomings. From early morning till late afternoon, with the element of surprise on their side, they fired at forty enemy vessels probably mostly anchored, partially manned and invested. Why did they sink only ten? The men were simple farmer and fisher folks untrained in the manual of arms and lacking target practice but forced by expediency to board crammed vessels to fight at sea. As late as the second half of the nineteenth century, F. Jagor, a German traveller who twice visited the Bicol region, observed that the faluas were manned by a numerous crew and armed with cannons but "the seamen recruited from the coastal

42. From Suzara's testimony in PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fol. 313.

43. *Ibid.*, fols. 264, 298b, 316.

pueblos do not know how to handle them."<sup>44</sup> What emotions must have seized on their hearts! They were in direct confrontation with the dreaded Muslims, the very name that used to instil panic so much so that "when they see [the] possibility to dock, they do it and run away."<sup>45</sup>

The men heard the explosion of their guns probably for the first time in that battle. Gunpowder was such a precious item that its use was strictly regulated. To avoid detection, it was prohibited to fire artillery in combat zones at night. Neither was it allowed in salutes and flourishes. The ruffle of drums sufficed. Firing was allowed only on certain occasions, like the feasts of the Resurrection and Corpus Christi, but with moderation; the feast of a patron saint, but at the expense of the town; and the warning of nearby towns when Muslims were detected at the bays or neighboring coasts, but with only three cannon shots.<sup>46</sup> Then why were the Commanders' reports of their fighting men's prowess in the October battles full of praise? Without belittling the heroism of the Bicolanos, that is the nature of Commanders quaffing the heady wine of victory.

#### THE BATTLE OF PITOGO BAY

The surviving Muslim vessels, including five pancos loaded with all the captives, took advantage of the gathering gloom. They escaped out of the channel between Haponan island and Yopoquit point, took a southeasterly course, rounded Caramoan point, made their entrance into Taebun channel and descended into Pitogo Bay at about nine o'clock or ten o'clock that night. The weary raiders who included Prince Nune whose panco was carrying eighty-one captives intended to land, beach their craft for repairs and reorganize their ranks. Nevertheless, a chance encounter denied them that relief. Deputy Commander Blanco sailing back that night with the lanchas of Albay, Gubat and Malinao, loaded with provisions from Lagonoy for the fleet, inadvertently found themselves in the midst of a scattered group of Muslim vessels. Keeping his cool in those critical moments, and after rightly assessing that anything could happen on account of thick dark-

44. Jagor, *Viajes*, p. 192.

45. *Ibid.*

46. PNA VP-A 11:3b-4. Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine*, 26:212; 51:270. MN Ms. 2237, doc. 9, fol. 81.

ness, his lanchas gunwale to gunwale with the enemy vessels, Blanco opened fire with a pistol shot. The battle of Pitogo bay commenced with gun flashes lighting the night.<sup>47</sup>

With great coolness under fire, Pedro de Vera, skipper of the Albay lancha, and his men spacing their shots well, fired five cannon shots from their twelve-pounder and a continuous drum-fire from four falconets. The other lanchas likewise acquitted themselves well. The crew of Gubat's lancha were raw volunteers but did not show any sign of cowardice. A certain Teniente Pedro of Malinao's lancha who functioned as artillery sergeant, distinguished himself.

The darkness was instrumental in the punishment inflicted on the enemy which was more severe than in the Tabgon action, since from the pancos Blanco sank, very few escaped alive to the mountains. Besides killing many, Blanco thought they sank more than ten pancos, including a large one. This was confirmed by floating debris and liberated captives. The captives testified that the large panco mounted a six-pounder bronze cannon, two two-pounder reenforced cannons and carried many Muslims who hastily escaped to the mountains. Compelled by the darkness and delivery of the provisions, Blanco continued sailing the whole night after the combat and reached the main fleet at 11:00 in the morning. Avid to know what booty was seized from the enemy, he lost no time in getting aboard the flagship.

The remaining pancos of the Pitogo encounter nosed their prows towards the Strait to escape another severe beating. True to his word that they would deal with the retreating Muslims from Albaywaters, Jose Tirado's armadilla was waiting at the vicinity of the Strait. The escaping Muslims sailed smack into Salgueyro's squadron which sank two pancos without any survivors. The Muslims turned around and decided to go back to the eastern coasts. But ill-luck kept on dogging them. On November 18 at Rapo-rapo, they ran into their old nemesis, Pedro Estevan, who was searching for them. Continuous cannonading was heard from morning till afternoon. Bent on annihilating the Muslims, the

47. This account was taken from a report written in the first person, with a folio missing and perhaps containing the signature of the author. All internal evidence point to Jose Blanco as the author. All information in this paragraph and the succeeding ones, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 297-298, 300b, 334b, 340b, 344, 350.

Bicolanos set up ambushes but failed to make any contact. They tried Tagaan in Caramoan peninsula where they presumed the Muslims resorted to and ultimately captured them.

With the stimulating stories of Tabgon and Pitogo and the news of hundreds of Muslims stranded in the mountains of Caramoan peninsula told and retold, towns and settlements in the area were astir with excitement and activity. People did not need any prodding to participate in hunting down their former oppressors.

Blanco left with three captured pancos loaded with armed men for the bay of Pambuhan in search of the Muslims on land. They captured three. The next day with five pancos, they sailed to the same place and succeeded in taking four barotos, capturing four Muslims and wounding some of those who fled to the mountains who numbered by then about 400, according to Blanco. In one of these expeditions, a Muslim named Simoob left his companions and voluntarily gave himself up.<sup>48</sup>

#### LIBERATORS OR LOOTERS?

After the battle of Tabgon, Estevan's squadron took possession of a considerable amount of booty from the captured enemy pancos. But although the hoary-headed Commander-in-chief wanted to inventory them, he could not do it immediately. After all, he was 80 years old, and with his impaired vision, he said he could not check on those trophies of war. The poor old Commander did not know his men well. Taking advantage of his age, they looted the choice booty.<sup>49</sup>

In his report to Goroztiza, Estevan claimed that the crew of some lanchas were the culprits. Left by the looters were four muskets which were deposited in the town hall of Caramoan, the gunpowder used for the rounds of salvos fired during the thanksgiving Mass at Caramoan, some trifles, *tampipes* or travelling bags made of reeds, and other items which were deposited in the warehouse at the capital, such as:

- 1 four-pounder reenforced iron cannon
- 1 two-pounder reenforced iron cannon

48. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, 298-298b, 309-309b.

49. All information in this paragraph and subsequent ones, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 262-262b, 263b, 282b, 297-298, 300-300b, 302-304b, 305b, 307-307b, 308b, 319b, 341.

- 1 one-pounder reenforced bronze cannon
- 2 modern pistols
- 4 lances
- 7 one-pounder shots
- 2 two-pounder shots
- 1 twenty four-pounder shot
- 4 rattan cartridge cases
- 3½pounds of powder
- 1 bayonet

The looters could not be definitely determined, but the crews of the lanchas of Catanduanes, Tabaco and Bacacay were believed to have been the perpetrators. Bending backward, Goroztiza opted to cancel the investigation so that if a similar emergency would arise in the future, the men would heartily answer the call to arms and embark again. At that time, there was no attraction to enter the service "because there was no salary whatever. . ." The Commanders, in particular, since they were principales, were reluctant to leave their homes without recompense. In that expedition, however, the regular ration of rice and meat made everyone content.

Among the members of the armadilla, the looting produced a mixed reaction. Hantelman who felt that the booty should have been shared equally, was disappointed. Being at the forefront of the struggle, his men were the most deserving and yet received nothing. Vera was pained. His men received nothing either. Pedro Segundo, skipper of a gunboat of Biga, Catanduanes, expressed ignorance of the incident. To the charge of looting, Justo Abundo, skipper of the lancha of Biga, could not give any answer.

In the glowing reports of the Alcaldes of Camarines and Albay, the 26 October battle was "an action so glorious to the arms of His Majesty that there are few examples in these islands of equal feats." They considered their victory so telling that "the blow suffered by the Muslims has had no equal for many years." They were right. The October victory was the turning point in Muslim depredations in Bicolandia. In the following years, raids were on a much smaller scale.

Goroztiza, the buoyant optimist, was euphoric. Still smarting from the Governor's reprimand, he seemed to have regarded the victory as the apotheosis of all his endeavors to fulfill his Governor General's orders at the cost of discomfort and fatigue on his part. As of 25 November, he reported the following results to the

Governor:<sup>50</sup>

- 9 pancos captured
- 10 or more pancos sank
- 59 captives liberated
- 16 Muslim prisoners, including one Christian renegade taken
- 1,000 or more Muslims killed and hiding in the hills

I still have to come upon a report of casualties or losses on the part of the Bicolanos. The nearest to it was Goroztiza's brief remark that the Christians did not suffer any damage in the battle of Tabgon, which is open to question.

The sixteen Muslim prisoners, fourteen of whom were in the public prison and two in the town hall of Caramoan, were kept in chains prior to their transport to the capital and shipment to Manila.

Goroztiza directed the captured pancos be manned by crews from the lanchas of Malinao, Tabaco, Bacacay and steered to the capital for beaching and inspection, if they could be mounted with some cannons after some structural innovations. Then in convoy with the lanchas, they would be employed for privateering against Muslims in the next season. He optimistically assured the Governor that if he had officers like Bernardo Hantelman, Jose Blanco and Rodrigo Huilson, who could be given command of the armadilla, he could accomplish more with the captured pancos and the Albay lanchas than with the King's lanchas, considering the Albayenos' bravery and obedience, and the little expense to the Ministry of Finance. For ₱1 per month, a ration of rice and meat, and ₱6 or ₱8 for the proprietors of the vessels, the Albayenos would heartily offer their services to avenge the wrongs visited on them by the Muslims. He further assured the Governor that by the first days of March he would be able to assemble twelve gunboats armed with guns he would request from the Governor. He also ordered the vessels of the armadilla retired to their respective towns.

Living up to his word, Goroztiza did not spare his praise and

50. All information in this paragraph and subsequent ones, unless otherwise indicated, were taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 237, 264b-265, 305b, 309, 320-320b, 321, 340-341b. The details of this terrible defeat in Bicolandia quickly reached Jolo and Mindanao together with other defeats in other places. The once daring raiders were so chastised that until 1823, their depredations were at a much smaller degree. Bernaldez, *Reseña*, p. 140.

gratitude to the officers and men, even civilians who either gallantly fought in the battle or contributed to the cause. Reporting to the Governor, he said "all fulfilled their duties" and cited their meritorious deeds and recommended the following for awards: Pedro Estevan, Jose Blanco, Bernar-Hantelman, Pedro de Vera, Agustin Camposano, Antonio Vicente and Pedro Alvarez.

Pedro Estevan, a man noted for his intrepidity and valor, was commended for carrying out with distinction the office of Commander-in-chief of Albay's armadilla from the middle of April till November in spite of his eighty years and very weary frame. In response to the antipiracy campaign, he left his home and farm. On the day he returned home to Tabaco as a hero, he was so needy that he begged P5 from the Alcalde Mayor. In consideration of his previous exemplary deeds and latest services, Goroztiza recommended a monthly retirement pension of P5 or P6 as sustenance for the poverty-stricken hero as well as an incentive to others for future heroic actions. Yet such actions would not be forthcoming in the future, if Estevan were the only guiding example or inspiration. In 1820 he was still waiting for his pension.<sup>51</sup>

Jose Blanco, Deputy Commander, for his energetic action and love of service, would have been conferred the command of the armadilla on account of Estevan's advanced age and fatigue, were it not for Estevan's merits as a retired captain of the *Marina Corsaria* and an awardee of the Escutcheon of Honor.<sup>52</sup>

Bernardo Hantelman, the German Commander of the Casiguran lanchas, for distinguishing himself excellently, engaging the enemy single-handed and performing his tasks despite all the discomforts in a small vessel, was recommended for an award.

Pedro de Vera, Commander of the Albay gunboat and Provisionary Second Lieutenant of Artillery, was cited for his method-

51. *Ibid.* fols. 325, 340b-341. His exploits were so heroic that Estevan had earned a folkloric stature among his people. To this day, in some coastal towns, he is remembered as a legendary hero popularly called "Tiban-Tiban." Stories say he was a strong, mysterious man who could walk on water. He fought Muslims single-handed and drove them away, bringing peace to many places. His sword is said to be still existing in Laulaw point, wherever that place is. PNL HDP Camarines Sur, I-26, p. 4.

52. An impressive compliment to Estevan and Blanco's unquestioned integrity is sworn statements executed by the gunboat Commanders: Gervasio Gonzalez, Bernardo Hantelman, Pedro Imperial de Vera, Pedro Luis, Pedro Segundo and Justo Abundo, attesting to the veracity of the two officers' account of the October 26 action. The Alcaldes of Camarines and Albay also proposed awards for them. All information in this paragraph and subsequent ones, unless otherwise indicated, was taken from PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fols. 282b, 301, 302-304b, 340-341.

ical fire control and coolness under fire at Pitogo Bay. With the hope of stimulating similar deeds in days to come, Goroztiza requested the Governor to consider De Vera's noteworthy actions.

Agustin Camposano, a generous proprietor of vessels, repeatedly lent his *falua* freely for privateering purposes, supplied with his own armaments. His actions showed him to be a man of trust who could be commissioned to command fighting ships. Moreover, he founded the town of Bulan where four *baluartes* or forts were erected and mounted with appropriate arms belonging to him. For his valuable services, the Alcalde petitioned the Governor to bestow on him a military rank in the Coast Guard.

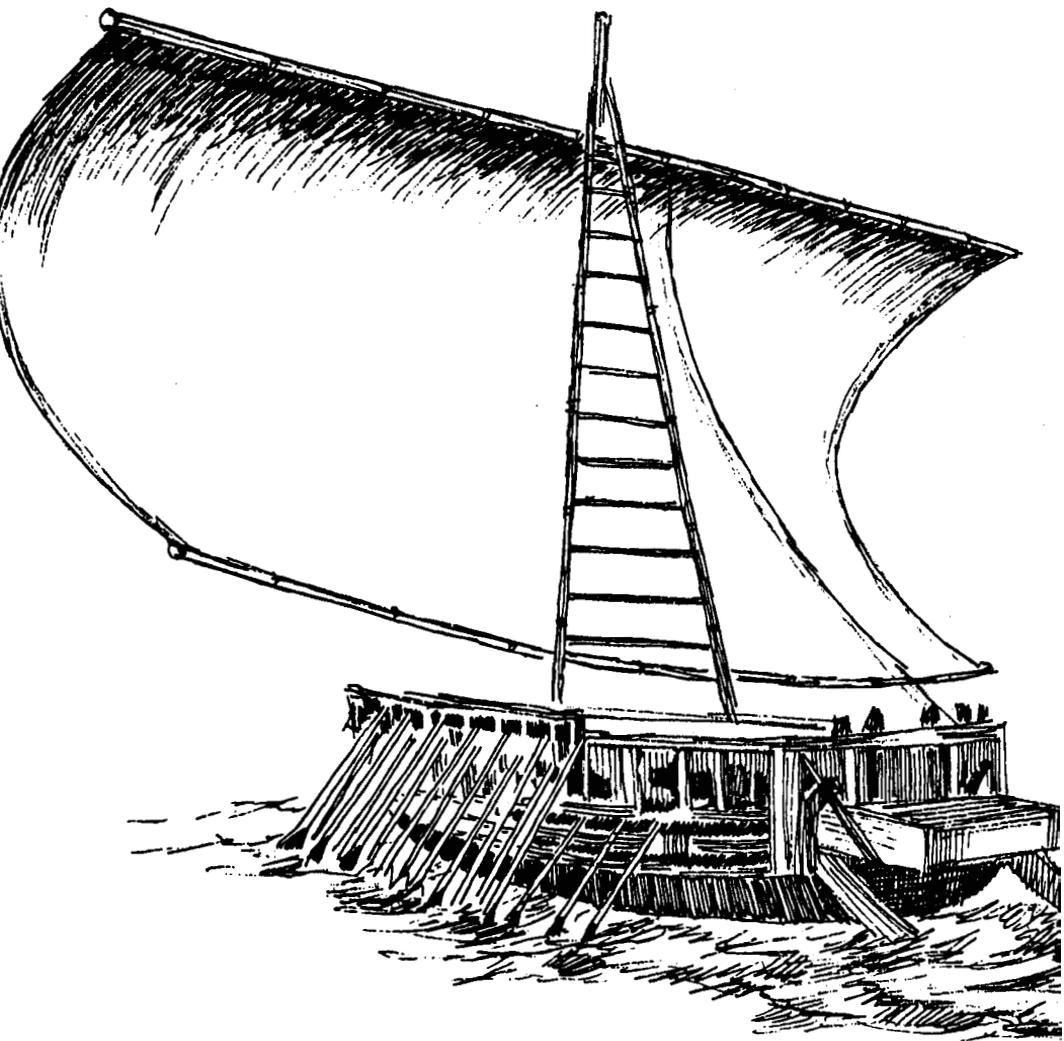
Antonio Vicente, a thirty-five- or thirty-six-year old native of Mandawe, Cebu, moved in 1811 to Albay and engaged in privateering against the Muslims with one of Agustin Camposano's *vintas*. In no time, the Muslims held him in terror after he captured two *pancos* of Muslims in Masbate, freed several captives, seized rice and powder and killed eighteen raiders which he proved by presenting thirty-six human ears to the Alcalde.<sup>53</sup> In 1818 petitioned by the town of San Jacinto in Ticao island, he transferred with several companions to that island where he established the *visita* of Ticao, opened lands for cultivation and constructed two wooden *baluartes* armed with two cannons bought with his savings from *balatan* or sea slug gathering. After his coming to Ticao, the raiders stopped harassing the island. For his outstanding valor, the Alcalde recommended an award for him.<sup>54</sup>

Pedro Alvarez, the Peruvian proprietor of the *falua* of Casiguran, was recommended for honors by Hantelman who skippered his *falua* to victory in Tabgon. Not to be outdone, Goroztiza petitioned that at least he be given a moderate payment of the salary he ought to receive from 1 May, the day he left his home. His *falua* traversed the entire opposite coast of Camarines in company with the *Mosca* without any relief. All the crew of the *falua* were considered no less deserving and should, therefore, be granted the favor they asked for, according to the Alcalde.<sup>55</sup>

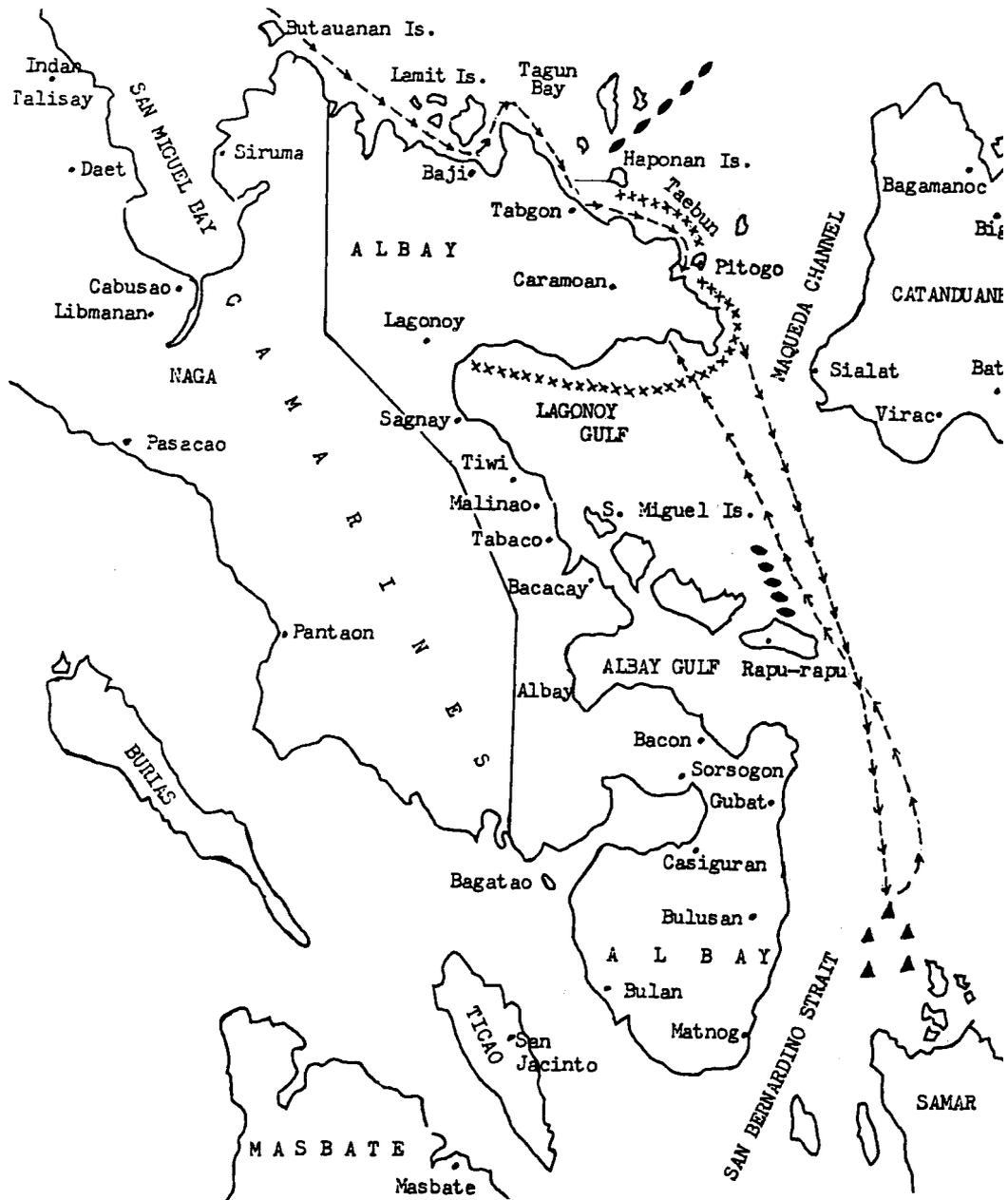
53. The cutting of Muslim ears dates back to the time Bornean and Magindanao raiders plundered Albay province. The Bicolanos severed the ears of several Mohammedan raiders near Cagraray island. PNL HDP Albay, III-4, pp. 1-2.

54. PNA EP-A 1772-1836, fol. 330. For more particulars of Vicente's life, see fols. 332-332b.

55. *Ibid.*, fols. 283b-284, 319, 341.



A Muslim *panco* propelled by a sail and three tiers of oars (a reproduction of original in Museo Naval, Madrid).



### The Battles of Tabgon and Pitogo Bays

→ Probable route of the Muslim raiders led by Datu Amayloco, Datu Caratao and Prince Nune

● Pedro Estevan's division

▲ Jose Tirado's armadilla

x Route of Jose Blanco's flotilla from Lagonoy

## CONCLUSION

With improvements in administrative policies under enterprising governors, appointments of efficient *alcaldes mayores* and an increased sense of communal unity among the Bicolanos forged by effective religio-political leadership and sufferings from a common enemy, serious attention was given to improve maritime defenses after 1800 when the Muslims engaged primarily in slave-raiding.

The Bicolanos' heightened consciousness of the need for solidarity in defense of life and property was vividly expressed in the determination of every town to construct one or two war vessels which were merged into an *armadilla* under one command. For the first time in Bicol history, the two provinces of Camarines and Albay had their own fighting fleets. Their unprecedented unity and cooperation peaked when both provincial fleets put out to sea in a concerted campaign to rid their waters of raiders.<sup>56</sup>

The reward came in the October victory at Tabgon and Pitogo bays, the crowning fulfillment, for the moment, of a long and costly search for a solution to what Governor Felix Berenguer de Marquina dejectedly called an "evil without remedy."<sup>57</sup> It would not be for long. Only two years after the dying echo of the guns of October had faded away, slave-raiding fleets once again roamed Bicolandia's seas, and they had to fight more naval battles off the coast of Albay.

## Abbreviations used:

- AFIO – Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental, Madrid
- MN Ms. – Museo Naval, Manuscrito, Madrid
- PNL HDP – Philippine National Library, Historical Data Papers
- PNA EP-A – Philippine National Archives, Ereccion de Pueblos – Albay.
- PNA EP-CS – Philippine National Archives, Ereccion de Pueblos – Camarines Sur.
- PNA EP-S – Philippine National Archives, Ereccion de Pueblos – Samar.
- PNA VP-A – Philippine National Archives, Varias Provincias – Albay.

56. The merger was proposed in 1785 by the Bishop of Nueva Caceres, Fray Juan Antonio de Orbigo. PNA EP-CS 1785-1837, fol. 14b.

57. Bernaldez, *Resena*, p. 136. Montero, *Historia de la pirateria*, 1:355.