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## **Koronadal Valley: Half a Century after Land Settlement in South Cotabato, Mindanao**

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HIROMITSU UMEHARA

# **Koronadal Valley** **Half a Century after** **Land Settlement** **in South Cotabato,** **Mindanao**

Koronadal Valley in southwestern Mindanao has become a very productive area dominated by Christian Filipinos, with its boom cities of General Santos City and Koronadal City at both ends of the valley. This dramatic change was ushered in by the distribution of farm lots to settlers from 1939 to 1950 by the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA). Demand for labor led to a massive influx of migrants until the 1980s, with particular ethnolinguistic groups dominating specific localities. The Green Revolution and subsequent commercialization deepened agrarian differentiation. The prevalence of tenancy frustrated the ideal of owner-cultivatorship. The indigenous B'laan, who failed to establish themselves as settlers, retreated to upland areas.

**KEYWORDS: KORONADAL VALLEY · LAND SETTLEMENT · CHRISTIAN SETTLERS · B'LAAN · DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION**

**K**oronadal Valley in southwestern Mindanao occupies the southeastern end of the vast Cotabato Valley between the Bukidnon-Lanao Plateau, the Central Mindanao Highlands, and the Tiruray Highlands. It extends for around 80 kilometers southeastward from the southern shore of Lake Buluan to the head of Sarangani Bay, between the Quezon and Roxas Mountain Ranges of South Cotabato (fig. 1). The whole Cotabato Valley was once a shallow sea channel during the Pleistocene epoch (Pelzer 1945, 143). With the uplift of the sea channel late in that epoch, a series of volcanic activities in the southern part of the Quezon Range gave rise to the volcano, Mount Matutum, and brought volcanic debris to the valley floor, thereby elevating the middle part of the synclinal valley. As a result of this geologic history, Koronadal Valley consists of three subregions; namely, North Koronadal, comprising an extensive plain that slopes gently northwestward with Marbel River draining to Lake Buluan; Middle Koronadal, consisting of the western and southwestern mountain slopes of Mount Matutum; and South Koronadal, which slopes gradually toward Sarangani Bay, consisting primarily of the southern foot of Mount Matutum and the plains of the Buayan, Silway, and Makar Rivers.

In Koronadal Valley, the Commonwealth government opened in 1939 a land settlement project by establishing the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA), a government corporation, as the implementing agency. The Koronadal Valley Project (KVP) was the first organized land settlement effort undertaken by the Philippine government (Lichauco 1956, 190), aimed at the amalgamation of Islamic and *Lumad*<sup>1</sup> peoples to Christian Filipinos, the increase of agricultural production, and the alleviation of agrarian unrest in Luzon and the Visayas (Commonwealth Act 441, Sec. 2). Although the NLSA was abolished in 1950 and its successor, the Land Settlement and Development Corporation (LaSeDeCo), was subsequently dissolved in the late 1950s, migrations to the valley persisted and have not ceased to this day. Sixty-one years later, the once sparsely inhabited valley (with 13 persons per square kilometer in 1939) has become by 2000 a densely populated, highly productive area (with 455 persons per square kilometer). The successful implementation of the government's land settlement program must have contributed to this regional development.

It used to be said that land settlement was an effort to convert virgin land or wild public land into productive agricultural land. However, one thing

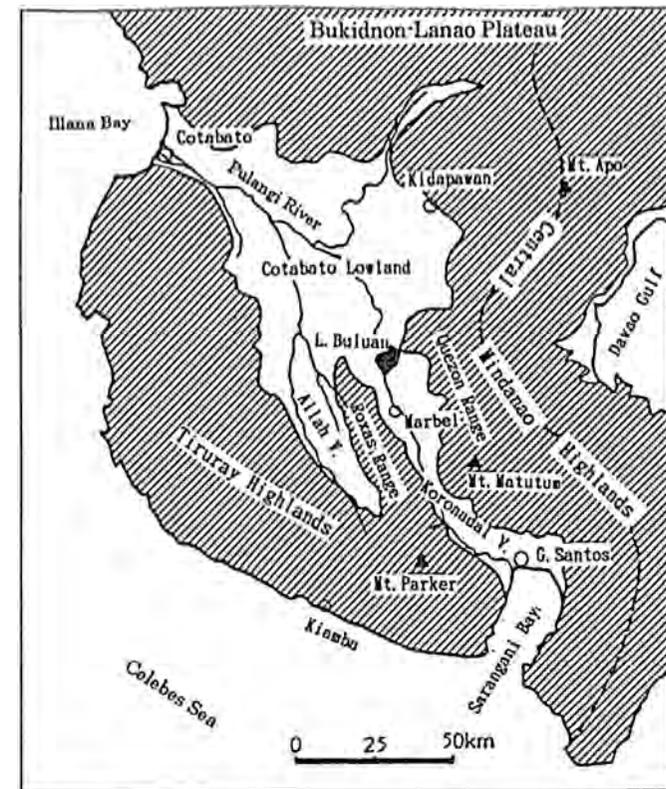


Fig. 1. Map of southwestern Mindanao showing the location of Koronadal Valley

has to be confirmed in this regard. Koronadal Valley was once the homeland of the B'laan, now an ethnic minority (Kinoc 2002, 2; Casiño 2000, 236). The names of local places with B'laan language traits provide evidence of the B'laan's early settlement (Ogoy 1985, 37). Rosell (1939, 493) states that the place name Koronadal derives from corrupted Maguindanao or B'laan words, *koron* (cogon grass) and *dalal* (plain), which literally means a cogonal grassland. In addition, the valley was politically a part of the Maguindanao Segmentary State, which existed from the early sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century (Majul 1973; Hayase 2003). Its center was in the Cotabato lowland along the lower and middle Pulangi River, where the political power center of the Maguindanao world resided. According to Casiño (2000, 20), the state core was the "Cotabato-Sarangani lowland Corridor," surrounded by an extensive maritime world over the coastal regions of the Moro Gulf, Celebes Sea, Sarangani Bay, and Davao Gulf. This means

that the Koronadal Valley is not merely a periphery of the Cotabato lowland but a strategic part of the Maguindanaon world. The B'laan were under the influence, if not direct political control, of the Maguindanaon for a significant period of time (Umehara 2008, 195–97). It was not a vacant land but inhabited by nearly 23,000 B'laan and Maguindanaon at the time of the settlement project's inauguration.

Within this context, the following questions are the most relevant to the Koronadal Valley Project of the NLSA. How was this project implemented in the valley where indigenous people traditionally eked out their livelihood? What factors have lured migrants to this area up to now? What has happened to the settlers, in particular their landholdings, after so many years? What is the regional impact of the project? Previous studies, as exemplified by Pelzer (1945), Lichauco (1956), Velmonte (1941), Romero (1977), and Ramirez (1979), have expressed mostly an appreciation for the NLSA-KVP, its earlier performance, and vigorous management. The only exception is that of Ogoy (1985), which focuses on the B'laan's receptivity toward agricultural innovation. No study so far has taken the challenge of making an evaluation of post-land-settlement development in the valley.

This article addresses the following issues, namely, the land settlement process, the formation of village community, agrarian differentiation, and the regional consequence of the project, including the dislocation of the indigenous people from the lowlands. The data and information for this study are based primarily on field research in Barangay San Roque, Koronadal City, together with official records on landownership available in local and national government offices. The major fieldwork was undertaken in May through September 1992, followed by supplementary field visits in 1994, 1996, and 2006.

## **Land Settlement in Koronadal Valley**

### National Land Settlement Administration

When the Philippine Commonwealth was inaugurated in 1935, the transition government sought to address several urgent problems with regard to Mindanao. According to Casiño (2000, 82–83), there were four urgent needs: (1) the solution or at least alleviation of population pressure in Luzon and the Visayas, (2) the integration of the Muslims and Lumad of Mindanao with Christian Filipinos, (3) the protection of Mindanao from the introduc-

tion of large plantations by foreign (American) capital, and (4) the containment of the rapid expansion of the Japanese colony in Davao.

According to Hayden (1955, 520–22), land grants to Filipino homesteaders would be the means to contain the expansion of Japanese colonists in Davao City. The planned homestead sites were to be located in the Compostela-Monkayo region, north of the city, in Kidapawan valley of lowland Cotabato in the west, and in the Koronadal Valley of the Cotabato-Sarangani Corridor in the south. In order to establish these colonies and facilitate the settlement and cultivation of unoccupied lands, the NLSA was created.

With land settlement as one of the pressing concerns of the Commonwealth government, the establishment of the NLSA and the start of land settlement operations were immediately initiated. Issued on 11 February 1939, Presidential Proclamation 383 and 384 reserved two districts for settlement, the Koronadal Valley and the Compostela-Monkayo region. Ten days later, the first group of settlers set sail from Manila to Mindanao. Although the NLSA was still an unofficial entity at that time (only on 3 June 1939 did the National Assembly formalize the creation of the NLSA through Commonwealth Act 441), it enjoyed significant prominence, as reflected in the composition of its board of directors and the size of its initial capital. Four incumbent state secretaries (Interior, Agriculture, Finance, and Labor), together with a leading Manila newspaper publisher, were appointed as board members; P20 million (US\$10 million) were appropriated for the NLSA. Moreover, the directors appointed the former chief of staff of the Philippine Army as the NLSA's manager (Pelzer 1945, 138).

Under American colonial administration, Koronadal Valley was one of the eighteen tribal wards in the Cotabato District of the Moro Province (Gowing 1977, 116). Starting in 1914 the area was partitioned into municipal districts. Koronadal Valley was under the jurisdiction of the municipal districts of both Koronadal (covering North and Middle Koronadal and a part of the Allah Valley) and Buayan (all of the extensive area around Sarangani Bay). A municipal district was not exactly a local system for self-governance but, as Gowing (1977, 263) put it, it represented "a rudimentary form of government designed to meet the needs of those areas where the majority of inhabitants had not developed a sufficient degree of sophistication desired by the Government." It was merely a nominal, loose framework to categorize the tribal people. Under these

circumstances, the NLSA was bestowed administrative power over an emerging settlement area.

The NLSA enclosed approximately 97,000 hectares as its project area (Santos 1940, 2). It was possible because the entire valley was classified under the public domain due to the failure of native inhabitants to claim ownership of the land. It comprised nearly 60 percent of the total area of the municipal districts of Koronadal and Buayan (approximately 171,000 hectares),<sup>2</sup> and covered all the lowlands and adjacent rolling hills at the foot of mountains. With farm lots for distribution amounting to 52,000 hectares, it was expected to accommodate roughly 5,000 settlers. Native inhabitants were to be included among Christian settlers and granted farm lots like the rest. The distribution of farm lots and the successful establishment of settlers' lives were the main functions the NLSA had to achieve.

### The Process of Land Settlement

Based on climatic and topographical considerations, the whole valley was divided into four settlement districts, namely Lagao (30,200 hectares) in South Koronadal, Polomolok (18,000 hectares) and Tupi (23,000 hectares) in Middle Koronadal, and Marbel (21,000 hectares) in North Koronadal. All districts were divided into two sites—the townsite (covering 45,000 hectares) and the barrio site (52,000 hectares). In a townsite, lots were allotted for a residential area, government center, marketplace, hospital, church, school, cemetery, park, and playground, along with a large reserved area for future development. Enough space was allocated to the town center as a future built-up area, reflecting the planners' anticipated development of the settlement district as a new local government entity, i.e., as a municipality. The barrio site was the area that accommodated the settlers. Standard farm lots were parceled out for distribution to the settlers, either a 12-hectare rectangular lot (200 meters by 600 meters) or an 8-hectare rectangular plot (133 meters by 600 meters) for those facing the national highway. Different kinds of services such as agricultural extension, marketing, financial assistance, sanitation, and health were extended to the settlers in the early years (Pelzer 1945, 139–41, 151–53).

Despite the great disturbance caused by the Second World War and its subsequent disorder, the number of settlers and migrants had increased all over the valley (Romero 1977, 12–15). With the growth of the settlement area, the administrative power that the NLSA exercised over settle-

ment districts overlapped with the jurisdiction of the municipal districts and the provincial board. Executive Order 82 (proclaimed in 1947) resolved this administrative overlap by organizing the municipal districts of Koronadal and Buayan into independent municipalities with self-government and legislative powers. The newly created municipality of Koronadal consisted of the municipal districts of Koronadal and Sebu, together with the southern tip of Malasila.<sup>3</sup> The settlement districts of Marbel, Tupi, and parts of Polomolok were included in the municipality of Koronadal, while the district of Lagao was included in the municipality of Buayan.

With the creation of full-fledged municipalities over the settlement districts and the gradual disappearance of available land for distribution to settlers, the NLSA drastically reduced its activities and was dissolved finally in 1950.

### Distribution of Standard Farm Lots and Subsequent Immigrant Influx

The first major activity of the NLSA was the distribution of standard farm lots to settlers. A 52,000-hectare barrio site was subdivided into standard farm lots and granted to settlers who had been recruited by the NLSA from Luzon and the Visayas. After the distribution of lots, there still remained a sizeable area of arable land on the fringes. In response to the ardent request of standby migrants over these lands, the NLSA parceled out the remaining arable land into farm lots, which however had irregular shapes and varied sizes.<sup>4</sup> The NLSA granted them to standby applicants,<sup>5</sup> together with the reserved lands and administration farms that had already served their function as experimental stations or demonstration farms.

According to an official report, the NLSA successfully resettled 8,300 families (Labayen 1983, 35), which exceeded by 3,300 its target of 5,000 families. Two reasons account for this accomplishment. One, the number of resettled families included all the settler families in the NLSA projects. Apart from the Koronadal Valley settlement project, the NLSA also undertook settlement projects in Allah Valley, Cotabato, and the Malig plain of Cagayan Valley in Luzon (Paderanga 1995, 11). In Allah Valley, for instance, the barrio site, with an area of 12,000 hectares, was supposed to accommodate at least 1,200 families (Lichauco 1956, 193). Two, as noted above, numerous irregular farm lots were distributed after the NLSA had finished the distribution of the regular standard farm lots.

A dramatic increase in population had occurred in the valley. Along with it, the former municipal district of Sebu and the settlement districts of Tupi and Polomolok were excised from the municipalities of Koronadal and Buayan, becoming independent.<sup>6</sup> By 1960 the Koronadal Valley consisted of four municipalities, namely Koronadal, Tupi, Polomolok, and General Santos (the name given to Buayan in 1954); these corresponded roughly with the four settlement districts of the NLSA.

Three trends may be inferred from the population growth pattern in the resettlement area. One, there was a massive influx of migrants shortly

**Table 1. Annual population growth rate, in percent, by intercensus period and municipality in the Koronadal Valley, 1939–2000**

MUNICIPALITY/CITY*		1939–1948	1948–1960	1960–1970	1970–1980	1980–1990	1990–2000
South Koronadal	G. Santos <sup>1</sup>	9.53	8.47	0.10**	5.69	5.30	5.10
Middle Koronadal	Polomolok <sup>2</sup>	-	-	7.68	6.18	4.19	2.16
	Tupi <sup>3</sup>	-	-	1.38	3.28	3.18	2.14
North Koronadal	Tampakan <sup>4</sup>	-	-	-	5.34	3.52	2.60
	Koronadal <sup>5</sup>	16.39	-0.00**	5.31	4.00	3.04	2.09
	Tantangan <sup>6</sup>	-	-	2.19	0.73	4.39	2.16
Valley as a whole		12.52	8.03	2.98	4.82	4.32	3.35

<sup>1</sup> Once called Buayan, it was renamed as General Santos in 1954 and became a city in 1968. Glan was separated from Buayan in 1949; Malungon and Alabel were separated from General Santos City in 1969 and 1971, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Separated partly from General Santos and Tupi in 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Separated from Koronadal in 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Separated from Tupi in 1969.

<sup>5</sup> It once covered the present-day Banga, Surallah, Tupi, Tampakan, and a part of Lake Sebu, Polomolok, and T'boli within its jurisdiction.

<sup>6</sup> Tantangan was separated from the Municipality of Tacurong in 1961.

\*\* The extremely low growth rates were due to the separation of the new municipalities during those periods.

Source: Commission of the Census 1943; Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1950; Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1963; NCSO 1974; NCSO 1984; NSO 1992; NSO 2005

after the start of the NLSA project as demonstrated by the high population growth rate in the valley (table 1). The valley's population jumped from 22,673 in 1939 to 65,571 persons in 1948. Since Christian settlers had displaced the indigenous people, practically all of the 65,000 plus persons were migrants from the northern islands. By 1960 another 71,000 migrants had moved to the valley, pushing the valley population to 165,750. Many people migrated to the valley with high anticipation of being able to settle. The availability of irregular farm lots for distribution might have reinforced this expectation. Moreover, the 12 hectares granted per settler family might have been too large for the family to clear and cultivate all at one time. Possibly, because the farm lot size was large enough for six children to inherit, each farming a 2-hectare plot, the government's intention was to promote owner-cultivatorship within at least two generations. However, many settlers opted for the immediate clearance and cultivation of the land in order to augment their household income. As a result, there were opportunities for late migrants to be hired as farm laborers or tenants in the settlement lands.

Two, the termination of the project by the end of the 1950s did not stop the continued inflow of migrants. It is estimated that, if natural increase is deducted from the total population, 65,000 to 95,000 migrants came to settle in the valley in every decade from 1970 to 2000. The population thus grew annually at about 4 percent from 1960 to 2000, a rate almost equal to that of an urban area.

Three, by the 1990s a reversal in population growth had occurred. Although the population in General Santos City maintained a high annual growth rate of 5 percent, the other city and municipalities in the valley had a lower growth rate of 2 percent in the 1990s. With the natural growth rate at 2.34 percent in the decade,<sup>7</sup> the population dynamics in the city and municipalities shifted from a massive inflow to a slight outflow. It seemed then that the population impact of the land settlement project had disappeared half a century later.

## Formation of the Settlers' Community

### The Birth of Barangay San Roque

At the very beginning, several villages were bounded on each barrio site of the settlement district. In Marbel District, the barrio site of 14,500 hectares was

partitioned into eight villages, respectively named Barrio Uno, Barrio Dos, Barrio Tres, and so forth, until Barrio Ocho. Although these barrios varied in size depending on location, the average was around 1,800 hectares, with approximately 180 settler families. There were some villages with their own settlement quarters. However, many settlers suffered from various inconveniences that arose from the distance between their settlement and farm lots, because the village had an excessively large area. A number of settlements within the initial barrios were later separated and proclaimed as independent villages. The number of villages in the municipality of Koronadal had increased from eight in 1940 to twenty-three in 1970. Barangay San Roque, the study village, is one of those villages that were separated from a mother village.

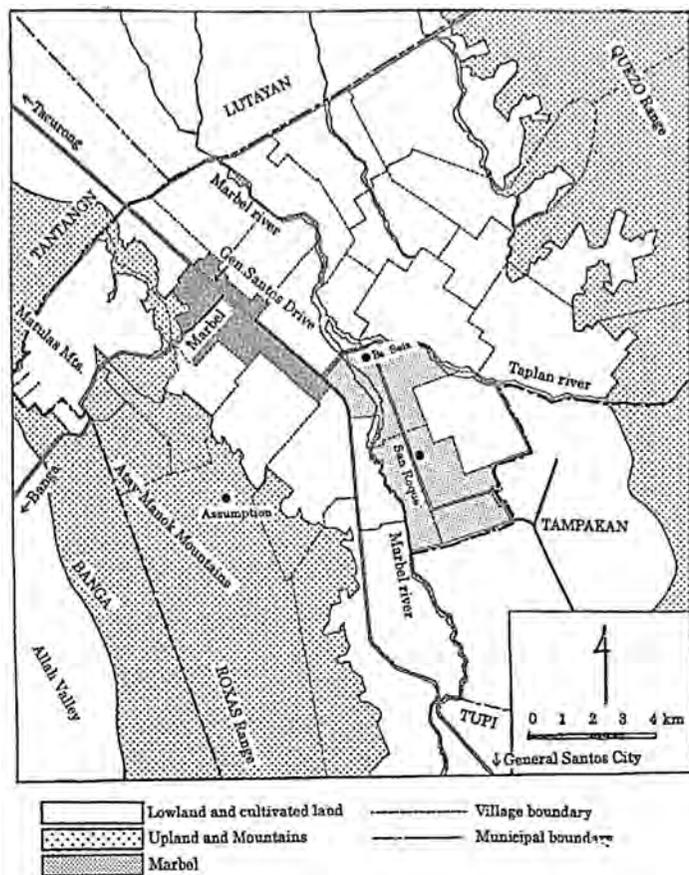
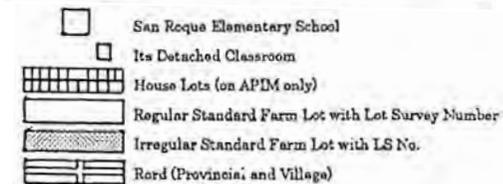


Fig. 2. Map showing the location of Barrio Seis and Barangay San Roque



Fig. 3. Cadastral map of Barangay San Roque



Barrio Seis, the mother village of Barangay San Roque, was created in 1940 (fig. 2). Located between Marbel River and its tributary, Taplan River, it has a roughly rectangular shape, 7 kilometers in length and 3 kilometers in maximum width, with a total area of 1,646 hectares on the right bank of Marbel River (MPDO 1996). With the settlement quarter in the northwestern end of the village, settlers who were allotted farm lots in the southern or eastern part of the village had to walk 5 to 7 kilometers from their settlement quarters to reach their farms or from their houses on the farm to the settlement quarter.<sup>8</sup> Because of the heavy travel burden to farmers and their family members who had to walk to school and the church, a group of settlers conferred with the town mayor. The history of Barangay San Roque included in the Barangay Profile<sup>9</sup> is narrated as follows:

It was the year 1953 when a group of settlers made a conference with the then elected mayor Hilario de Pedro, Sr. They presented their problem on the viability of a school as their children has to travel 4 to 5 kilometers to school located in Barrio 6. Mayor De Pedro asked this group of settlers if they can have a site for the school and at the same time procure materials for the buildings. Building materials were in abundance by the time and it did not take time to build the school house composed of the primary grades.

Four adjacent settlers (owners of Lot Survey numbered 492, 493, 523, and 524 in fig. 3) each donated a hectare, while settler volunteers procured building materials from the surrounding mountains. The area neighboring the school site was subdivided into a house lot of 600 square meters each. Villagers bought these house lots, built their houses, and moved around the school. Here emerged a new village center composed of a 4-hectare school site and a cluster of residences (fig. 3).

By March 1954, the settlers on the eastern and southern part of Barrio Seis, on the right bank of Marbel River, had separated from its mother barrio and officially formed Barangay San Roque in the municipality of Koronadal, with a land area of 931 hectares. At the start, 68 regular standard farm lots were granted to the 68 original settler families in the early 1940s. Several B'laan or Maguindanaon families must have been included among them, for nine farm lots were reserved for these families. However, more than 100 hectares of potential arable land at that time remained as residual areas of the regular standard farm lots, located mainly on the natural levee and back marshes of the Marbel River. In response to the ardent pleadings of migrants without land grants who aspired to obtain access to settlement lands, the NLSA subdivided the residual area into ten irregular farm lots and distributed them among the informal migrants in Marbel.<sup>10</sup> Given the availability of 68 regular standard farm lots and 10 irregular farm lots within its boundary, there might have been in 1954 at least 78 families in the new village.

### Population Increase and the Settlers' Community

Based on the 1960 Population Census, there were 681 persons or an estimated 108 households in Barangay San Roque. By the year 2000, the population had jumped to 3,249 persons or 661 households (table 2). The annual

population growth rate over the four decades from 1960 to 2000 was approximately 4 percent, which is as high as the growth rate of an urban area.

What accounted for this dramatic growth in village population? One, the large labor demand for immediately clearing and cultivating the standard farm lots granted to the settlers accounted for the initial boost in village population. As noted, the 12-hectare standard farm lot was too large for a settler household to develop at once. Hence there was a large initial labor demand for land clearance and development. Two, as the newly developed land expanded the area for cultivation, more laborers were needed to cultivate the expanded farm area. In other words, labor demand rose successively, first for land development and then for direct farm cultivation activities.

Table 2 provides a brief narrative of the process of land development and population growth in Barangay San Roque. There seemed to have been a gradual increase in the population from an annual rate of less than 5 percent in the 1950s to nearly 6 percent in the 1970s, suggesting an influx of migrants in the latter decade. In the 1980s, the population continued to grow,

**Table 2. Population and number of households in Barangay San Roque, 1940–2000**

YEAR	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	POPULATION		ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
		NUMBER	PER HOUSEHOLD	
Early 1940s	68 <sup>a</sup>	428 <sup>c</sup>		
Early 1950s	78	491 <sup>c</sup>		
1960	108 <sup>b</sup>	681	6.30 <sup>d</sup>	4.78
1970	180 <sup>b</sup>	1,122	6.25	5.12
1980	353	1,981	5.61	5.85
1990	498	2,678	5.38	3.06
2000	661	3,249	4.92	1.95

<sup>a</sup> Estimated from the number of regular standard farm lots.

<sup>b</sup> Estimate based on population per household.

<sup>c</sup> Estimate based on 1960 average population per household.

<sup>d</sup> Estimated from the 1960 total population (27,088,000) divided by the total number of households (4,297,000) in Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1960.

Source: For 1940s and 1950s, estimated from the TMCR. For 1960 to 2000, Bureau of Census and Statistics 1963; NCSO 1974; NCSO 1984; NSO 1992; NSO 2005.

but its rate of growth declined to a little over 3 percent, which still exceeded the natural growth rate of 2.35 percent. This meant that in-migration persisted throughout the 1980s. By the 1990s, however, the annual growth rate dropped to less than 2 percent, definitely below the natural growth rate (2.34 percent in the 1990s), thereby reversing the historical in-migration flow and resulting in an outflow in the population of San Roque. Thus land development in the village reached its limit in the late 1980s, if not in the early 1990s. The area of cultivated land increased to 859 hectares in 1975 (MDS 1977, 55), and then to 917 hectares in the early 1990s (compiled from the Tax Mapping Control Roll [TMCR]). Since there were no available lands for clearing at the time of the 1992 field study, it is possible to assume that 917 hectares represented the maximum area for land development in the village, corresponding to the trend of the entire Koronadal Valley as shown in a later section on the impact of land settlement.

Moreover, it seemed that the population carrying capacity of the village could absorb new migrants before the 1990s. Based on the estimates of respondent-villagers, a 2-hectare farm would be the minimum landholding for an owner-cultivator household to maintain an average current level of living in the village. In 1975, in the pre-Green Revolution period, more than 2 hectares would have been necessary to maintain the average living standard of an owner-cultivator household. If we assume 10 percent more than the present holding was necessary, it can be estimated that the population carrying capacity of the village in 1975 could accommodate 390 households. The village farm economy, however, had only 276 households in that year, which meant the village could still absorb a number of migrants. By 1990 the improvement in corn yields and the expansion of the cultivated area were able to raise the population carrying capacity to 457 households, but the actual population had grown to 498 households. Thus, by the start of the new decade, the village capacity reached its limit or saturation point, and brought about the decline in population growth rate.

Migrants have come mainly from the Visayas. In 1992, 155 households were interviewed in four village districts around the village center, namely Purok Avellana, Cabaylo, Ledesma, and Sanz.<sup>11</sup> This interview must have involved about 30 percent of the total number of households in the village as there were 498 households in 1990. Based on the field interview results, table 3 shows a distribution of household heads by place of birth and period of migration. Up to the 1960s there was a high concentration of household

heads who were born in the Western Visayas; after the 1970s most were born in Mindanao. Among household heads from Mindanao, 41 were second-generation heads who were born in San Roque after their parents settled there, and the remaining 37 (including two B'laan) came to San Roque from other parts of Mindanao. Ethnolinguistically, those from the Western Visayas were mostly Hiligaynon, except for three Aklanon. Among those from Mindanao, all of the 41 second-generation heads and 17 out of 37 first-generation heads were Hiligaynon too. In the study village, therefore, the Hiligaynon comprise 65 percent of first-generation heads, 74 percent if second-generation heads are included. Barangay San Roque can be said to be a Hiligaynon village.

As a matter of fact, there are neighboring villages called Magsaysay and New Pangasinan where Ilokans dominate the communities. A strong concentration of settlers' birthplace is commonly observed in resettlement communities.<sup>12</sup> This pattern is due mainly to the settlers' way of communication in the early days. Information on general conditions, including labor demand around a newly settled area, must have been relayed to their relatives and friends whenever earlier settlers made return visits to their hometown or province of origin. As table 3 demonstrates, the high incidence of migration from the same locality lasted until the 1960s and the 1970s. The formation of the village community was decisively influenced by the ethnolinguistic origin of earlier settlers.

**Table 3. Distribution of household heads, by birthplace and period of migration to Barangay San Roque, 1949–1992**

REGION OF ORIGIN	-1949	1950S	1960S	1970S	1980–1992	NOT IDENTIFIED	TOTAL
Luzon	0	2	1	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
Visayas	West	16	11	12	17	4	<b>60</b>
	Central	0	0	0	3	1	<b>4</b>
	East	1	2	0	1	1	<b>5</b>
Mindanao	(8)	(19)	18(14)	13	20	0	<b>78(41)</b>
Not identified	0	0	0	0	2	2	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25(8)</b>	<b>34(19)</b>	<b>31(14)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>155(41)</b>

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate number of household heads born in San Roque.

Source: Data from the field study conducted in 1992.

## Village Economy

In the 1990s agricultural land occupied 98.5 percent of the total land area. According to the 1983 Barangay Profile, corn was planted on 70 percent of agricultural land, rice on 20 percent, and coconut and other crops on 10 percent. The 1992 field study showed that the area planted with corn had increased to 80 percent, while the area planted with rice and coconut together with other crops grew 14 percent and 6 percent, respectively. In the same year (1983), there were five corn shellers, three corn and rice mills, and one blacksmith operating among its small-scale village enterprises. Given these data and the village landscape, it may be said that people in San Roque basically depended on agriculture, particularly the cultivation of corn, which could be done up to three times a year.

With the start of the Green Revolution in corn in the early 1980s across the Philippines, farmers in the village shifted from the cultivation of white corn to yellow flint corn. They began purchasing hybrid seeds and applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides. By the 1990s, corn yield per hectare had significantly improved in the village, increasing to as much as 3 tons per hectare compared with the national average of 1.5 tons.

Although the planting of yellow corn has spread widely and yields have increased greatly, farmers have not benefited significantly from the Green Revolution. The increase in farm production costs has offset the revenues from higher yields. Those who have gained financially from the Green Revolution have been the grain traders in the village and town centers such as Marbel and Tampakan. They have prospered apparently by integrating the various agribusiness activities, such as hybrid seed distribution, sale of fertilizers and chemicals, contract plowing by four-wheel tractors, corn shelling, and buying and selling in increasing commercial quantities of harvested corn within the locality. While village grain traders prospered in this commercialization process and thus accumulated wealth, many small village enterprises, except blacksmiths, were displaced by the early 1990s.

We have to admit, however, the rapid expansion of nonfarm activities in the village. Table 4 shows the employment of members of farm and nonfarm households. A farm household is defined as one that, with more than half a hectare of farmland, either lives off the rent from the land or cultivates the land itself. Two features can be identified in the table. One feature is the heavy involvement of households in multiple employment opportunities, with more than 40 percent of farm households engaged in nonfarm jobs.

**Table 4. Number of farm and nonfarm households, by type of job held, Barangay San Roque, 1992**

TYPE OF JOB*	FARM HOUSEHOLD	NONFARM HOUSEHOLD	REMARKS
<b>Farm related:</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>16</b>	
Farming	3		
Rent Receiver	4		
Farm labor	46 <sup>a</sup>	14	<sup>a</sup> 3 hired tractor operators included
Livestock raising	1	1	
Fish pond owner	1		
Cattle broker ( <i>koredor</i> )	1		
Grain trader (buy-sell)	2		
Blacksmith		1	
<b>Nonfarm-related:</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	
Nonfarm labor	7 <sup>a</sup>	15 <sup>b</sup>	<sup>a</sup> 2 automobile drivers included <sup>b</sup> 3 drivers included
Government employee	7	3	
Corporate employee	4	4	
Tricycle driver	7	3	
Tailor ( <i>mananahi</i> )	1	1	
Tuba gatherer ( <i>manangete</i> )		3	
Weaver ( <i>manogpawod</i> )		3	weaving thatch by coconut leaves
Artisan (furniture making)		2	
Carpenter/construction	6	1	
Midwife ( <i>hilot</i> )	1		
Contractor		1	
Vendor	1	1	
Store owner	6 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	<sup>a</sup> flower shop, video rental, photo studio, vulcanizer, billiard shop. <sup>b</sup> 2 <i>sari-sari</i> stores
<b>Without a job (retiro)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>57</b>	

\*Type of job is a side job for farm households and a main job for nonfarm households.

Source: Data from the field study conducted in 1992.

In general, almost all farm households have additional jobs besides farming. The most common side job is that of hired farm labor, contracted either on a *pakyaw* (piece contract) basis for weeding cornfields, or on a *partida* (consignment) basis for corn harvesting, or on an *arawan* (daily wage) arrangement for the gathering, hauling, and cracking of harvested coconuts.

A second feature is the expansion of nonfarm activities as an income source in the village. The nonfarm households comprise nearly 40 percent of village households. They live on farm or nonfarm labor activities or village-life related activities such as tailoring, coconut wine gathering, thatch weaving, and operating a *sari-sari* (variety) store. As far as table 4 is concerned, these households are more involved in nonfarm employment opportunities than in farm-related activities, and nonfarm jobs exceed farm-related job opportunities. Given the accessibility of the city center (Marbel) to villagers, eighteen households have members who are employed in government offices or private companies as wage earners. Four households among 155

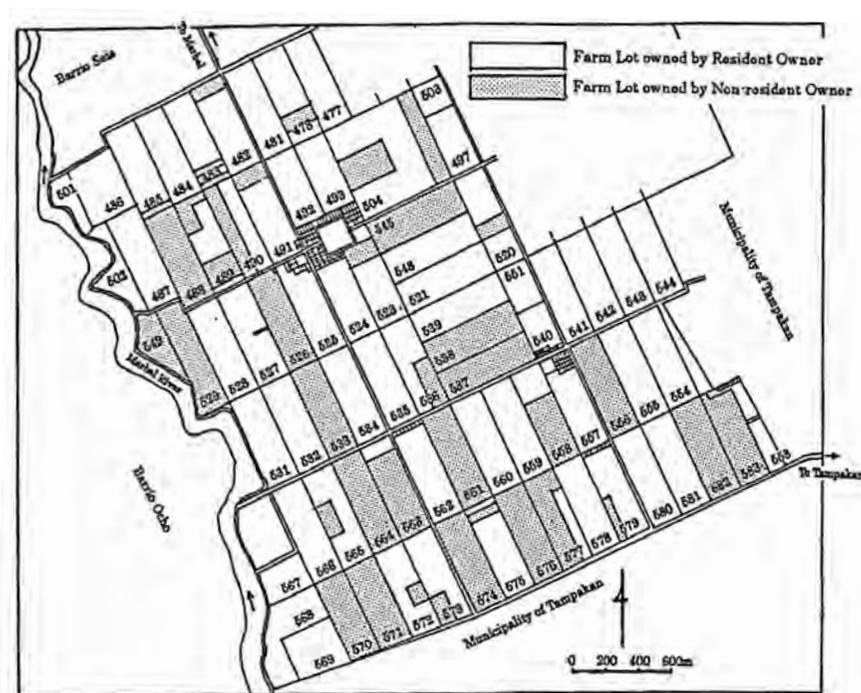


Fig. 4. Cadastral map of Barangay San Roque showing location of farm lots owned by resident and nonresident owners

respondent-households have members who are overseas migrant workers. The heavy dependence of villagers upon nonfarm employment opportunities in San Roque is not much different from those in ordinary villages in the lowland Philippines.

## Changes in Landholding Patterns

### The Present Landholding Pattern

The village land area consists of 917 hectares of agricultural lands and 14 hectares that are nonagricultural. As noted, the agricultural lands are planted mainly with corn and partly with rice and coconut. House lots (93,512 square meters), school sites (41,000 square meters),<sup>13</sup> and the village assembly hall site (600 square meters) comprise the nonagricultural lands.

When San Roque became an independent village in 1954, there were at least 78 landowners because the new village had the same number of farm lots distributed to settler families. At that time, all the villagers were supposedly owner-cultivators. By the mid-1990s, however, the number of farm lot owners within the village boundary had increased to 218 owners, almost three times as many as at the start, suggesting the subdivision of the initial standard farm lots. Information on this process of land subdivision, as well as the accompanying transfer of landownership, can be gleaned from the Assessor's Property Identification Map (APIM) and the TMCR<sup>14</sup> at the Provincial Assessor's Office.

One feature of the present landholding pattern in San Roque is that owners of village lands are not necessarily residents of San Roque, as shown in table 5. Resident landowners numbering 147 have 577 hectares, which comprise 63 percent of the total agricultural land (fig. 4). This number of resident owners constitutes less than 30 percent of the total number of households, or less than 50 percent of the estimated number of farm households (315 households), in the village at the time of the 1990 census.<sup>15</sup> This pattern implies substantial agrarian differentiation in the village.

Most of the remaining 71 landowners who live outside San Roque reside within the municipality of Koronadal, such as the nearby villages and the town center of Marbel. Others live outside Koronadal, such as the municipality of Tampakan, General Santos City, and other places. There are 47 landowners residing outside San Roque but within Koronadal (let us call them "nonresident-within"), and they outnumber or represent twice as many as the 24 landowners residing outside Koronadal ("nonresident-without").

There is a marked difference between these two groups of nonresident owners. The nonresident-within own 3.99 hectares on average and are much like resident owners (3.93 hectares), while the nonresident-without are large landowners who own 6.35 hectares on average.

Altogether the nonresident owners control 340 hectares, which account for about 40 percent of agricultural lands in the village. Initially all the land was owned by resident owners. During the period of half a century, nonresident ownership has expanded significantly. This transformation is due mainly to the transfer of residence by villagers and partly to property transmission from villagers to outsiders. The nonresident-within owners primarily derive from the former, while the nonresident-without from the latter.

**Table 5. Selected data on farm lots and owners, by type of farm lot and landowner in the mid-1990s, Barangay San Roque**

	TOTAL	RESIDENT OWNER*	NONRESIDENT OWNER	
			WITHIN	WITHOUT*
<b>Total</b>				
No. of owners	218	147	47	24
Area (hectares)	917.10	577.28	187.36	152.47
Area per owner	4.21	3.93	3.99	6.35
No. of farm lots	254	146	51	27
Area per lot	3.61	3.28	3.67	5.67
<b>Subdivided lots</b>				
No. of owners	194	135	44	15
Area (hectares)	591.46	408.46	151.56	31.54
Area per lot	3.05	3.03	3.44	2.10
No. of farm lots	227	162	48	17
Area per lot	2.61	2.52	3.16	1.86
<b>Nonsubdivided lots</b>				
No. of owners	26	13	3	10
Area (hectares)	325.64	168.82	35.80	121.02
Area per owner	12.52	12.99	11.93	12.10
No. of farm lots	27	14	3	10
Area per lot	12.06	12.06	11.93	12.10

\* In this column there is one owner who owns both subdivided farm lots and nonsubdivided lots, but the total number of landowners remains free from double counting.

Source: Compiled from the TMCR (Barangay San Roque, Municipality of Koronadal, Province of South Cotabato).

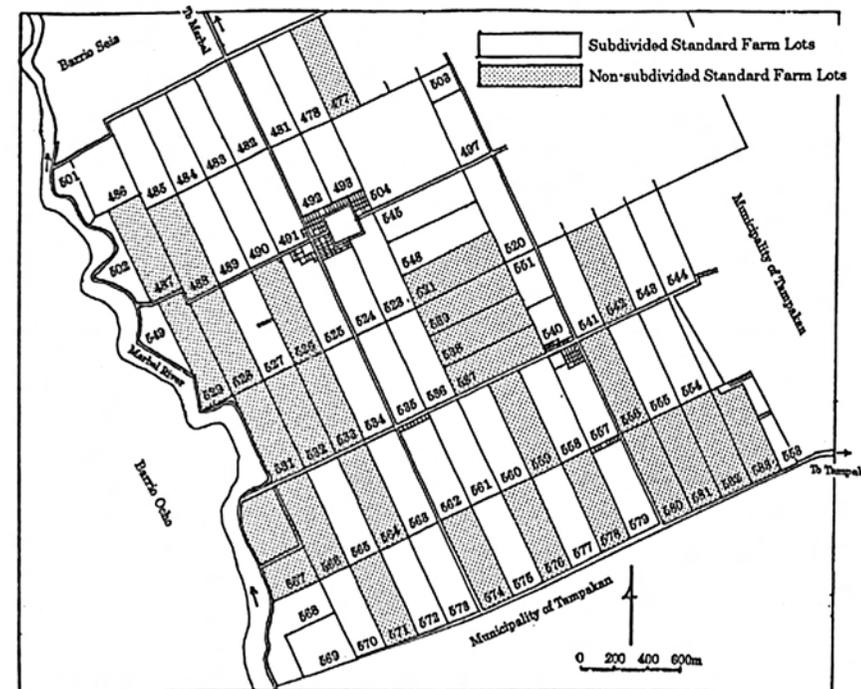


Fig. 5. Cadastral map of Barangay San Roque showing location of subdivided and nonsubdivided farm lots

### Subdivision and Concentration

Agricultural lands in the village may be classified into two: the nonsubdivided lot (former standard farm lot), and the subdivided lots (fig. 5). Out of 78 standard farm lots, 51 lots (591 hectares) have been subdivided into 227 farm lots during the past five decades, resulting in an average farm lot size of 2.61 hectares. The ownership of these subdivided lots resides in the hand of 194 persons, suggesting a peasant type of landholding with an average size of 3.05 hectares. The 27 nonsubdivided lots, with a total area of 326 hectares, are owned by 26 persons each of whom retain an average of 12.54 hectares. In general the owners of nonsubdivided or subdivided lots comprise two distinct groups, with the exception of two owners (one resident owner-grain trader and a nonresident-without) both of whom own subdivided and nonsubdivided lots simultaneously.

The process of Hiligaynon village property transfer, according to Jocano (1983, 37), is effected through any of the following means: *bakal* (pur-

chase), *panubli* (inheritance), *prenda* (mortgage), *baylohanay* (exchange), or *boloslanay* (alternate right of use of the property). In San Roque, inheritance is apparently the most important means because most of the present landowners are the second-generation offspring of the original settlers. Based on an assessment of the TMCR records, and an examination of whether the name of the present owner (middle name in case of married female) corresponds with that of the original settler, 22 standard farm lots (with a total area of 242 hectares) were clearly identified to have been transferred through inheritance. On record these 22 standard farm lots have been subdivided into 122 lots, apparently in accordance with the principle of equal inheritance. Similarly, it may be inferred from the TMCR records that the sale or mortgage of farm lots was the means of transfer in the case of 29 standard farm lots, with 348 hectares that had been subdivided into 105 lots. For these farm lots, the names of the owners differ from the names of the original settlers, and the sizes of the subdivided lots vary across farm lots.

The TMCR records also show an interesting pattern of landholding by different types of landowners. Resident and nonresident-within owners hold more subdivided lots than nonsubdivided lots; subdivided lots comprise 71 percent and 81 percent of the respective landholdings of these two types of owners. In contrast, nonresidents-without owners possess more nonsubdivided lots than subdivided ones, the nonsubdivided comprising 79 percent of their holdings. In general, given this land distribution pattern, the majority of subdivided lot owners, who are small landholders with an average farm size of 3.03 hectares, represents the peasant-type landholder. In contrast, the nonresident owners, with an average holding of 12.52 hectares, represent the landlord-type of ownership.

To what extent has land concentration or accumulation proceeded in San Roque? Based on official records (the TMCR), two owners can be identified to have amassed landholdings larger than the standard farm lot of 12 hectares. One is a nonresident-without who resides in General Santos City and owns 15.92 hectares, including one subdivided and one nonsubdivided farm lot. The other is a grain trader in the village who has expanded his landholdings to reach 58.64 hectares, consisting of nine subdivided lots and two nonsubdivided lots (fig. 6). According to the grain trader's account, he owns or controls other lands in the neighboring villages, amounting to more than 100 hectares. But the exact size of his holdings cannot be confirmed because the TMCR that I could access covers only Barangay San Roque.

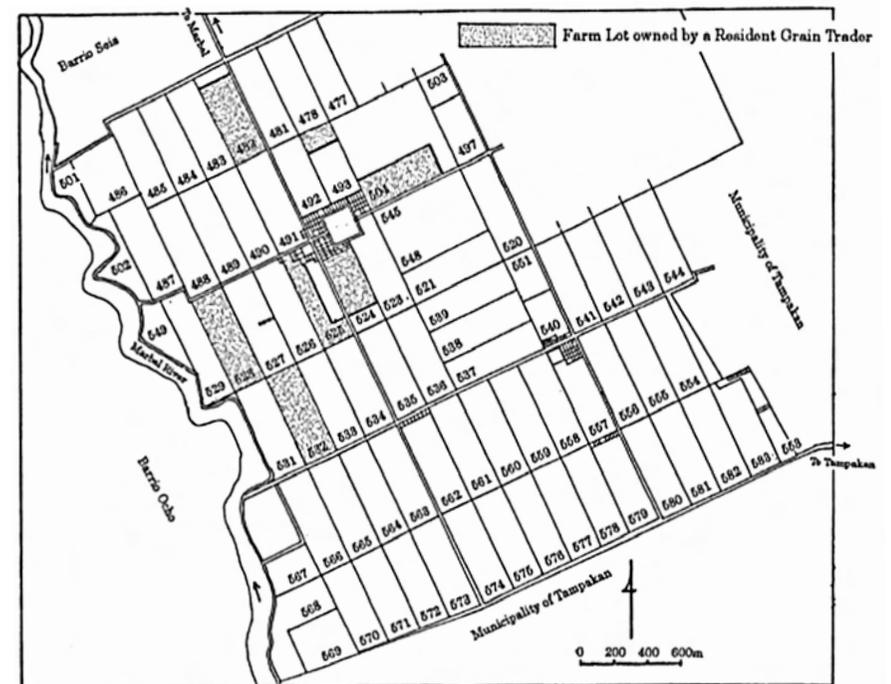


Fig. 6. Cadastral map of Barangay San Roque showing location of farm lots owned by a resident grain trader

Based on the trader's account, he was able to secure land rights in the past as a result of his lending operations and the failure of indebted farmers to meet their obligations. At the onset of the Green Revolution, the trader was selling hybrid corn seeds, fertilizers, and chemicals on credit, and was providing tractor-plowing services for payment in kind after the harvest.

Is land concentration in the village limited only to the case of the grain trader and a nonresident-without landowner? In this context, attention must be given to the owners of standard farm lots. Besides the abovementioned grain trader and nonresident-without owners, there are still 24 more nonsubdivided lot owners, including several grain traders of Tampakan, who own a total area of 290 hectares. If these standard lots were cleared one small portion at a time, then the process of land development might have been analogous to the gradual accumulation of subdivided farm lots either through purchase or mortgage arrangements. Hence the present holdings of nonsubdivided farm lots can be included among cases of land concentration in the village.

## Expansion of Tenancy Relations

Nonresident and nonsubdivided farm lot ownership and the concentration of landholding by a grain trader suggest the prevalence of tenancy relations in the village because of the excessively large size of their holdings or the distant location of those holdings from their residences. It is estimated that, in the 1990s, land under tenancy covered more or less half of the village's agricultural land. The bases for this estimate are the following assumptions. One, 100 percent of the nonsubdivided lot, regardless of resident or nonresident ownership, is rented out. These tenanted lots amount to 326 hectares. Two, two-thirds of subdivided lots, amounting to 122 hectares, owned by nonresident owners are assumed to be under tenancy. Three, although subdivided lots owned by resident owners are considered as conforming to a peasant type of landholding, around 10 percent of these lots is under tenancy, amounting to around 41 hectares. Consequently, around 490 hectares—or 53 percent of total farm lots in San Roque—are assumed to be under a tenancy arrangement.

What is the feature of tenancy relations in the village? The 1992 field study provides information on the distribution of farm households by landholding types. Out of the 90 crop-planting households, 39 are tenant cultivators, 4 are part-owners, and 1 is a tenant/mortgagee, who collectively represent 49 percent of farm households (table 6). In turn, these 44 tenants have a tenancy contract with 19 landowners, 10 of whom are resident owners and the rest nonresidents. Interestingly there are some small resident own-

**Table 6. Number of farm households and corresponding areas, by type of landholding, Barangay San Roque, 1992**

TYPE OF LANDHOLDING	FARM HOUSEHOLD		FARM AREA		AREA PER FARM
	NUMBER	PERCENT	AREA (HECTARE)	PERCENT	
Cultivating landlord	1	1.1	8.50	4.4	8.50
Owner-cultivator	39	43.3	94.00	48.4	2.41
Part-owner	4	4.4	9.50	4.9	2.37
Tenant	39	43.3	71.25	36.7	1.83
Tenant/Mortgagee	1	1.1	3.00	1.5	3.00
Mortgagee/Mortgagor	6	6.7	8.00	4.1	1.33
Total	90	100.0	194.25	100.0	2.16

Source: Data from field study conducted in 1992.

ers with less than 3 hectares who rent out their farms. The average tenanted area varies from 0.5 hectares to 3 hectares. Two types of tenancy systems exist in the village—the *agsa* (sharing system) and the *alkila* (leasehold system). *Agsa* relations are more prevalent, and entail a more subordinate relation between the landowner and the tenant than in the *alkila* system. Depending on cost sharing agreements, the rates of sharing the harvest vary from 50–50 to 75–25 in favor of the tenants.

There are also mortgagee/mortgagor cultivators who cultivate pawned-in or pawned-out land. A tenant/mortgagee cultivates tenanted land together with pawned-out land. During the time of the field study, the usufruct right of a mortgaged land remains with the mortgagor when the amount borrowed is up to P20,000. Usufruct then transfers to the mortgagee when the amount pawned exceeds P40,000 to P50,000. In the former, the mortgagor has to pay the mortgagee one-third of the harvest, which is considered an interest on the principal. Moreover, if the mortgagor defaults for three consecutive years, the right of redemption over the mortgaged land is foreclosed. There are 9 hectares cultivated under this type of arrangement. For the village as a whole, the estimated area of mortgaged land is 42 hectares, which account for about 5 percent of agricultural lands in the village. Given this magnitude, the practice of land mortgages, together with peasant indebtedness, has helped accelerate the process of peasant differentiation in the village.

If in the early days of land settlement owner-tillers constituted 100 percent of farm households, much change has transpired. While lands have been transferred through purchase, debt payment, and mortgages, tenant farmers cultivate nearly 50 percent of agricultural lands in San Roque under the *agsa* system. Thus, over half a century after the NLSA land settlement project, the landholdings in the village have been transformed into the present pattern, which can be deemed as a great frustration of the ideal of owner-cultivatorship contemplated by the land settlement planners.

## Impact of Land Settlement on the Valley

### Emergence of a Vast Productive Area

The successful implementation of the land settlement project in Koronadal Valley has made it one of the most productive and prosperous areas in southwestern Mindanao.<sup>16</sup> The area's productive capacity has been greatly im-

proved. Settlers and migrants to the valley have provided sufficient labor supply to develop the land, expand the region's farm area, and cultivate crops.

At the start of land settlement in 1939, there were 52,000 hectares in the barrio site to be granted as farm lots to as many as 5,000 settlers. By 1960, twenty-one years later, 14,403 farm households had settled in Koronadal Valley, and their farms covered 146,486 hectares, nearly three times as big as the original plan (table 7). The farm area at that time, however, had not yet been fully developed, with most still lying idle or covered with forest growth. The area planted with temporary and permanent crops amounted to 56,617 hectares, or less than 40 percent of the total farm area.

By 1991, just half a century after the land settlement, the number of farms had increased to 34,694 farms, nearly seven times the expected number in 1939. The farm area, however, was reduced from the 146,486 hectares of 1960 to 111,846 hectares, mainly because of the separation of two municipalities (Alabel and Malungon) from General Santos City and partly due to the urban expansion of General Santos City and other municipalities. Effectively, however, the farm area was already fully developed by this time, with the planted area increasing to more than twice the area in 1960, and accounting for 97 percent of the total farm area in the valley.

Agriculture in Koronadal Valley has developed close to the image envisioned in the first annual report of the NLSA. It stated in 1940 that the Marbel Settlement District would be a granary of Koronadal Valley, with

**Table 7. Selected data on farms in the Koronadal Valley, 1939–1990**

ITEMS	1939 <sup>a</sup>	1960 <sup>b</sup>	1991 <sup>c</sup>
No. of farms	5,000	14,403	34,694
Farm area (hectare)	52,000	146,486 (100.0)	111,846 (100.0)
Area per farm (hectare)	10.40	10.17	3.22
Planted area (hectare)	-	56,617 (38.7)	108,105 (96.7)
Valley Area* (hectare)	97,000	265,105	171,360

\*Valley Area (Koronadal) included four municipalities (General Santos, Koronadal, Polomolok, and Tupi) in 1960, two cities (General Santos and Koronadal), and four municipalities (Polomolok, Tampakan, Tantangan, and Tupi) in 1991 due to changes in administrative boundaries. Figures in parentheses are percentages to the farm area.

Source: <sup>a</sup>NLSA's Koronadal Valley Project; <sup>b</sup>Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1963, 19/2; <sup>c</sup>NSO 1995, 6–7

its pronounced dry and rainy seasons, whereas the soil and climatic condition in Lagao and Polomolok Districts would be ideal for the large-scale and mechanized cultivation of rubber, coffee, cacao, and soybeans (Santos 1940, 3–5). Indeed, farming in North Koronadal had specialized precisely in cereal production whereas Middle and South Koronadal produced more commercial crops such as pineapple, banana, coffee, cacao, cotton, and vegetables. According to the 1991 Agricultural Census, rice and corn farms occupy nearly 90 percent of the total cultivated area in North Koronadal, while in Middle and South Koronadal the areas devoted to export fruits (pineapple and banana) as well as fruits and industrial crops (coconut and cotton) constitute 40 percent of the planted area.

While in Middle and South Koronadal the large plantations of agroindustrial transnational corporations (TNC) produce export crops, together with the contract farming system between settlers and agribusiness firms (such as Dole Philippines, Stanfilco, Cargill, Pioneer, and others), in North Koronadal cereal production has been the main activity of peasant farmers, given their average farm size of 2.14 hectares.

Another impact of land settlement has been the emergence of vibrant urban centers at both ends of the valley, namely Dadiangas-Lagao of General Santos City in the south and Marbel of Koronadal City in the north. In 1939 these places (Dadiangas and Marbel) were solitary B'laan settlements, with a population of 318 and 45 persons, respectively. However, their favorable geographical location influenced later developments. Thus, when the NLSA came to Koronadal Valley, Dadiangas-Lagao became the port of entry, the terminal of the national highways, and the administrative as well as supply center of the project. In 1954, as mentioned earlier, Buayan became General Santos Municipality, and twelve years later it was promoted to the status of a chartered city. Also since the 1960s, the agroindustrial TNC (Dolefil) began to launch the production of export fruits by opening a big plantation in Middle and South Koronadal. From the mid-1970s Dolefil began diversifying its products. It not only produced pineapples and bananas, but it also processed and exported tuna, prawn, shrimps, cut flowers, asparagus, and guava juice, which were shipped from its own wharf at Makar. Dolefil had more than 20,000 hectares of pineapple plantation, which employed 5,406 laborers and around 2,000 temporary workers in the early 1990s (AFRIM 1991). In the 1980s, Cargill and Pioneer started its hybrid corn seed business, together with big local corporations in General Santos City. These

business activities boosted the local economy extensively, and General Santos became a booming city in the south. By 2000 the city's population had reached more than 400,000, making it the fourth largest city in Mindanao and the eighth in the whole Philippines.

The strategic location of Marbel underlies the rapid growth of Koronadal as an inland center of official land settlement, and later its gradual development as a traffic terminal and a commercial, administrative, and educational center. With a population of 133,000, Koronadal was proclaimed in 2000 as the component city of the province of South Cotabato.

### Demographic Transformation

Another impact of land settlement on the valley has been the radical change in its ethnolinguistic composition. The massive influx of settlers and later migrants from the north resulted in the sudden expansion of the Christian population. Until 1939 Koronadal Valley was inhabited mainly by local ethnolinguistic groups, such as the B'laan, Maguindanaon, Tagakaolo, Samal,

**Table 8. Population by mother tongue in the Koronadal Valley, 1939 and 1990**

MOTHER TONGUES	1939		1990		
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	
Minor	B'laan	16,858	73.9	22,728	4.2
	Maguindanao	2,913	12.8	16,079	3.0
	Tagakaoro	1,970	8.6	-	-
	Samal	587	2.6	708	0.1
	T'boli	-	-	608	0.1
	Others	208	0.9	3,923	0.7
	Subtotal (minor)	22,536	98.8	44,041	8.1
Major	Cebuano	210		230,209	42.3
	Hiligaynon	-	0.9	184,326	33.9
	Ilokano	65	0.3	17,075	3.1
	Tagalog	-		26,011	4.8
	Others	-		41,941	7.9
Subtotal (major)	275	1.2	499,562	91.9	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>22,811</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>543,603</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Note: In 1939 Koronadal Valley consisted of two municipal districts, while in 1990 it consisted of one city and five municipalities.

Source: For 1939, Hayase 2003, 145. For 1990, NSO 1992, 58-63.

and others, who constituted 99 percent of the total population (table 8). Visayans and Ilocanos, who are classified as major ethnolinguistic groups at the national level, comprise the minority groups in the valley.

Dramatic changes in ethnolinguistic composition occurred after 1939. When the land settlement program started, there were twelve B'laan settlements<sup>17</sup> located within the boundary of present-day Koronadal City. By the time of the 1960 Population Census, ten of the twelve settlements had disappeared. Only two of them, Marbel and Taplan (Zulueta), have been able to keep their names to the present, while the indigenous people such as the B'laan and Maguindanaon have been almost completely replaced by Christian settlers and migrants. The 1990 Population Census shows the sweeping change. By then, the major ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, such as Cebuanos, Hiligaynon, Ilokans, and Tagalog, dominated and accounted for more than 90 percent of the population in the valley, while the B'laan, Maguindanaon, and other ethnic groups were reduced to only 8 percent (table 8). The newly settled major groups thus surpassed the once-dominant ethnolinguistic groups in the valley, relegating them to a minority status within the past fifty years.

### Exclusion of the B'laan from the Lowlands

What does this demographic transformation, or the exclusion of the B'laan from the lowlands, mean? To illustrate the process of exclusion, the case of one village is examined.

At the outset, the NLSA reserved a number of standard farm lots for indigenous people. The records of the DENR Koronadal Office show that nine farm lots (with an area of 108 hectares) out of 68 regular standard farm lots were reserved for the B'laan in Barangay San Roque. These nine lots corresponded to Lot Survey No. 494, 495, 496, 521, 522, 537, 538, 539, and 548. Although in the APIM five of these lots could be located, the other lots (494, 495, 496, and 522) could no longer be found (fig. 3). There is a B'laan name for Lot 538, but according to the TMCR the present owner of this lot has a Christian name, a resident in the adjacent municipality of Tampakan.

In the 1992 field study, only two B'laan household heads could be interviewed, but very little information was obtained from them. According to the villager-informants, the NLSA definitely gave farm lots to the B'laan, but eventually or shortly thereafter they lost their lands. Dispossession happened in various ways, such as forfeiture of land because of nonpayment of the land

tax, easy or careless disposition of land because of urgent cash needs, and victimization through fraudulence and deception.

In 1938 members of the government reconnaissance survey party gave verbal assurance to the B'laan and Maguindanaon in Koronadal Valley that their land rights would be respected. They were also advised to declare their land for tax purposes and obtain the tax receipt as evidence of ownership (Pelzer 1945, 142). Moreover, in the following year the NLSA reiterated to the B'laan that they would be given farm lots in the valley for their settlement. To the indigenous people, these pronouncements were difficult to understand because they had lived in and used the entire valley and surrounding mountains without external authority, permission, and interference since the time of their forefathers. Similarly, the requirement to pay land taxes was profoundly confusing. The B'laan saw land as just a part of nature, which was created supernaturally, and whenever they wished to avail themselves of its bounty they performed rituals to secure permission from the Creator. Being part of the land or nature, they did not claim to own any part of it; its customary use, although fluid and short-lived at present, was associated with continued and active participation (Ogoy 1985, 43–44). Thus, to the B'laan it was incomprehensible that to outsiders land was an object of transaction, had a monetary value, and was permanently owned by the claimant or buyer.

As Christian settlers claimed ownership of land parcels, absolute and final within the valley, and received the protection of the state, the B'laan became totally excluded from the lowlands. In order to survive and maintain the mode of subsistence that they had before 1939, initially they retreated to the valley's periphery, the foot of the mountains on both sides of the valley. But this area was also subsequently parceled out by the NLSA in irregular farm lots and distributed to migrant settlers. The last remaining refuge for the B'laan was the rugged mountainous area on the Quezon and Roxas Ranges (Umehara 2004, 77–79).

How the B'laan survived life in the rugged mountains, especially from the 1940s to the early 1950s, is not known. In 1953 the Marist Brothers put up a mission school, the Notre Dame of Bolul, at Ladol (Ogoy 1985, 18) and called upon the B'laan from the surrounding mountains of Ataymanok in the northern Roxas Range to move to and settle in the area. This resulted in the establishment of the village, Assumption, in the then Municipality of Koronadal, which became an independent barangay in 1959. Consisting

of the barangay proper called Ladol and six small settlements, Assumption is the third largest village in the city, covering an extensive area of 2,624 hectares (MPDO 1996). But it has no arable lowland. In 2000 the village had a population of 1,753 persons, consisting mainly of around 250 B'laan households.<sup>18</sup> Based on the Consolidated Map of Koronadal,<sup>19</sup> there were 178 home lots and six small farm lots (each generally less than 0.4 hectare) within the village proper and its immediate vicinity.

Before the retreat to their mountainous refuge, the B'laan traditionally practiced shifting cultivation on the lowlands, and hunting as well as gathering of forest products in the mountains. Rather than sedentary agriculturists, they were more or less seminomads, who changed fields after every two cropping cycles. With their retreat to the mountainous area, adaptation to the new environment was their hardest challenge. For instance, how would shifting cultivation be practiced on the mountain slopes? According to Ogoy (1985, 104–5), 68 out of 75 informants cultivated land with a slope of more than 16 percent, and 9 of them tilled land with a slope of more than 45 percent. Apart from the extreme disadvantage in cultivating sloped land, finding areas for shifting cultivation was hardly possible for most households because of the limited availability of cultivable land. Consequently they have merely survived by continuously tilling the same sloped area, which of course causes erosion and the serious deterioration of soil fertility. Thus the B'laan of Barangay Assumption have faced a serious food crisis as every year they produce increasingly less and less corn, their main crop (*ibid.*, 116). Many B'laan have coped by frequently going down to the lowlands and looking for odd jobs as farm workers, laborers, porters, and the like. Over the past half-century, the B'laan have gradually lost their economic viability, and are increasingly being marginalized as an endangered minority group.

### Concluding Remarks

The following are the major findings that can be drawn from the foregoing discussion. Firstly, Koronadal Valley has experienced three stages of development in the past half a century after the land settlement, i.e., the land settlement or colonization stage (1939–1950s), the in-migration stage (1950s–1980s), and the out-migration stage (1990s to the present).

The land settlement stage consisted of two phases. The first phase (from 1939 to the late 1940s) was the period when the NLSA distributed rectangular standard farm lots to original settlers, while the second phase (from the

late 1940s to the mid-1950s) was the time when the NLSA and LaSeDeCo distributed irregular standard farm lots to migrant settlers. At this stage, the model of owner-cultivatorship was established within the locality.

During the in-migration stage, although the available land for distribution had disappeared by the mid-1950s, the massive influx of migrants to the valley did not cease until the end of the 1980s because of the high labor demand that arose due to the relatively large size of the standard farm lot that a settler household by itself could not cultivate all at once. Migrants easily found the opportunity to be hired as farm hands or tenant cultivators. They tended to choose to settle in the community where they had relatives or friends among the earlier settlers, which resulted in the predominance of a particular ethnolinguistic group in each village and the reproduction of sociocultural relations similar to those of their province of origin. Agrarian differentiation began soon after the colonization. It was accelerated by the Green Revolution in the 1980s as exhibited by the expansion of nonfarm households, nonresident ownership, and the prevalence of tenancy. Half a century after land settlement, owner-cultivatorship is about to lose its majority status.

The cultivated area in the valley reached its maximum level and the carrying capacity of each village seemed to have reached its saturation point either by the end of the 1980s or in the early 1990s. The result was a dramatic reversal in population, which saw a change from the inflow to the outflow of population at the village level. This reversal defined the third stage, one of out-migration. It is highly likely that the outflow of population will persist from now on, unless new investments are made to expand employment opportunities in the area.

Secondly, the apparent impact of land settlement has been the transformation of Koronadal Valley into one of the most productive, Christian-dominated areas in southwestern Mindanao, as demonstrated by the dramatic expansion of cultivated areas, the demographic transformation, and the growth of two boom cities in the valley. It was indeed the fruit of Christian settlers' toil. However, it is only one side of the coin because, on the other side, the existence of indigenous inhabitants before the land settlement has been overlooked.

Thirdly, the unilateral implementation of the land settlement project in the Koronadal Valley was made possible because native communal lands were classified as public land by the land law of the country. Native inhabitants were accepted by the NLSA as settlers together with Christians,

but most of them failed to establish themselves among Christian settlers. Many B'laan left the settlement community and retreated to the surrounding mountains. They have survived in this resource-poor and deteriorating environment under threat.

## Abbreviations Used

<b>AFRIM</b>	Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao
<b>APIM</b>	Assessor's Property Identification Map
<b>KVP</b>	Koronadal Valley Project
<b>LaSeDeCo</b>	Land Settlement and Development Corporation
<b>MPDO</b>	Municipal Planning and Development Office
<b>MDS</b>	Municipal Development Staff
<b>NAMRIA</b>	National Mapping and Resource Information Authority
<b>NBOO</b>	National Barangay Operation Office
<b>NCSO</b>	National Census and Statistics Office
<b>NLSA</b>	National Land Settlement Administration
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>TMCR</b>	Tax Mapping Control Roll

## Notes

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- 1 A Cebuano word meaning native or indigenous. *Lumad* has become the collective name for nineteen ethnolinguistic groups, including the B'laan (Rodil 2004, 41).
- 2 This estimate is derived from a summation of the present areas of the two cities (General Santos and Koronadal) and four municipalities (Polomolok, Tampakan, Tantaran, Tupi).
- 3 As stated in Executive Order 82, but its exact location is not identified on the maps.
- 4 A standard farm lot means the farm lot granted to settlers by the NLSA or LaSeDeCo. There are two types, namely regular and irregular. A regular farm lot denotes an 8- or 12-hectare rectangular lot, whereas an irregular farm lot means a nonrectangular lot of varied sizes. It is

considered that the former was granted to original settlers from 1939 to the 1940s and the latter to later migrants from the late 1940s to the early 1950s.

- 5 Let us call as migrant settlers those who were granted irregular farm lots, as against the original settlers who were granted regular standard farm lots.
- 6 Tupi was proclaimed as an independent municipality by Executive Order 162 issued in 1953. The settlement district of Polomolok was separated from Tupi and General Santos as an independent municipality by Executive Order 264 issued in 1957.
- 7 The natural population growth rate of a certain place is assumed to be roughly equivalent to that of the national population, provided there is no significant population movement across the national boundary.
- 8 One of the original settlers (the owner of Lot Survey No. 493) told me during a field interview in 1992 that the location of their farms was decided by drawing lots.
- 9 Strictly speaking, this is National Barangay Operation Office (NBOO) No. 1, a blank form prepared in 1983 by the NBOO of the Ministry of Local Governments. The form was completed by the barangay captain, and filed with the Municipal Development Office File of the Municipality of Koronadal. Attached to the front page is a History of Barangay San Roque, signed by then Brgy. Capt. Herminigildo Barrientos. We refer to it here simply as Barangay Profile.
- 10 A settler who was granted an irregular standard farm lot (Lot Survey No. 502), measuring 6.61 hectares, attested to this point during a field interview.
- 11 *Purok* is a Tagalog word, meaning district or place. San Roque had eleven purok in 1992. By the time of this field study (May through Sept. 1992), many houses were standing along the village roads that were located vertically across the provincial road stretching from Marbel and to Tampakan.
- 12 For a typical case in the settlement of the Digos-Padada Valley in Davao del Sur, see Simkins and Wernstedt 1971, 57–72, 133–37.
- 13 Included here are the school sites of the San Roque elementary school (4 hectares) and its detached classroom (0.1 hectare) in Purok Lasang.
- 14 The Tax Mapping Control Roll (TMCR) does not have any date of compilation. Since it was in existence when I had access to it in 1996, it can be assumed that the data acquired from there pertained to the mid-1990s. On the TMCR, the property owner's name, address, lot survey number, title number, and area in square meters are recorded in the order of the Assessor's Lot Number. For the exploration of the present landholding pattern, it was necessary to rearrange the records of the said roll in the order of the Lot Survey Number that was given to each standard farm lot at the time of the NLSA land survey. Because the Assessor's Lot Number counted more than 400 within the village, the rearrangement was a tedious task. Only through such rearrangement, however, could the process of subdivision and transfer of ownership be clarified with regard to the original seventy-eight standard farm lots.
- 15 This is based on the assumption that the proportion of farm households to the total number of households in the village is the same as that of the field interviews (63.2 percent).
- 16 Precisely speaking, we must include here a part of Allah Valley (the present-day municipalities of Banga, Norala, Santo Niño, and Surallah) because land settlement in that part was initiated by the NLSA and pursued by LaSeDeCo. The developments thereafter appear to be very similar to that

of Koronadal Valley as demonstrated by the fact that the farm area had expanded from 12,000 hectares in 1950 to 40,852 hectares in 1991.

- 17 Based on the topographical map (1 to 50,000) of the National Mapping Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), the twelve B'laan settlements identified were Belnebe, Bollock, Ellucy, Guisasawa, Kalomonga, Kalondapok, Mani, Marbel, Talik, Taplan, Taymanok, and Tukanadilas.
- 18 Estimated based on the assumption of seven persons per family, by taking into consideration the B'laan's practice of polygamy, marriage at a young age, and high infant mortality.
- 19 This was the map I saw at the Provincial Assessor's Office in 1996. The map's date of production was not given.

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