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This historical note tells the story of the Philippine Revolution and the American occupation of the remote island of Mindoro at the turn of the century. This period of time is considered a unity because it included the anticolonial fight against two colonial powers (Spain and the United States of America) and because the Filipino participants in both struggles were, by and large, the same.

Only the second phase of the revolution in 1898 took place in Mindoro. It is argued that the revolution was ideologically and by means of propaganda prepared by people from outside the island. It was, therefore, an imported revolution. The local elite and their followers were ready to rise in arms against the Spanish colonial government, but almost all the senior leaders came from neighboring provinces. Further, the revolutionary forces in Mindoro were too weak to defeat the Spaniards. An expeditionary corps of revolutionaries from Batangas saved the day.

The ordeal of the people of Mindoro, however, began with the arrival of the United States army in Mindoro in July 1901. All the towns except for two were destroyed and the island was devastated. Only after that devastation did Mindoro become one of the most peaceful provinces in the Philippines, and the basic structures of its development in the twentieth century were established.

Mindoro on the Eve of the Revolution (1898)

Due to its geo-strategic location, the island of Mindoro had fallen victim to numerous Moro onslaughts since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Spanish colonial government was unable

I am grateful to Mr. Antoon Postma, Mangyan Assistance, Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro, who provided me with copies of records from the archives of the Recollect Order in Marcilla, Spain, and who shared his knowledge of Mindoro’s past with me.
to protect the inhabitants. Especially after the devastating Moro attacks around the middle of the eighteenth century the island became almost completely depopulated. Thus, in 1770 only 2,700 Christians were living on the large island of Mindoro (total area: 10,000 square kilometers!)

That was the reason why the socioeconomic developments in nineteenth century Philippines (e.g., the opening to world trade, a commercialized export economy, land concentration, a rapid increase of tenants and landless, and the emergence of a new elite: the ilustrados) did not affect Mindoro. The inhabitants were still on a subsistence economy at the end of the nineteenth century. The poor means of communication and transportation—no roads existed on the entire island—caused the isolation of the coastal settlements from one another. The only way of communication was by boat. The few Spanish civil and military officials resided in the provincial capital of Calapan. Actually, the colonial power in the settlements was represented by the Recollect priests, who had been in spiritual charge of the island since 1678 (Schult 1990, 29 ff.).

One response to the socioeconomic changes in the Philippines had been the spread of brigandage throughout the archipelago in the second half of the nineteenth century, in particular. Banditry became endemic in the Philippines and posed a severe threat to peace and order. The colonial government was forced to raise a native police, the Guardia Civil, in 1868 to fight banditry. Due to Mindoro’s isolated situation, it became one of the preferred retreats of tulisanes, or ladrones, as they were called.

Thus, the Tercio Civil de Policia, a native paramilitary police, was raised in Mindoro in 1881 numbering 100 men. Their task was to protect the pueblos (towns) and to eradicate banditry. But they failed. The tulisanes lived in the impenetrable jungle and swamp areas of the east and west coasts. The surroundings of Lake Naujan at the east coast was their headquarters. Moreover, the tulisanes were in league with the most influential men of Naujan, the island’s second largest town. Some of them even lived in Naujan itself.

In the 1890s the tulisanes were in control of large areas and raided even towns such as Naujan in 1892, Sta. Cruz in 1895, or Sablayan in 1896. Tulisanes also attacked the Recollects’ large San Jose Hacienda, killing, and robbing carabaos and cattle. Although the raids of the tulisanes increased towards the end of the century and the peace and order situation in Mindoro became more and more fragile, there is no evidence that these people were inspired by revolu-
tionary ideas. The first phase of the Philippine Revolution, starting in August 1896, in and around Manila, did not affect Mindoro. The parish priests of Calapan, Frs. Benito Ojeda and Alejandro Laborda, wrote in their reports of 1896 and 1897 that the revolution had not spread to Mindoro (thanks to divine providence, as Father Ojeda added).\(^1\)

**An Imported Revolution**

No revolutionary situation had evolved in Mindoro because of the island's isolation and backwardness. Since 1897, however, the situation in Mindoro had escalated as the parish priest's reports stated. Thus, the Spaniards dispatched troops (a company of cazadores with 140 soldiers and a company of Spanish marines numbering 51 soldiers) to Mindoro. Rumors had it that a secret society (*Katipunan*) was about to be founded on the island. The Spaniards observed with suspicion the arrival of people from the municipalities of Taal and Balayan, in the province of Batangas, which was a center of the revolution. In a Spanish report it was stated that Mindoro became a retreat of revolutionaries from other provinces. It was no wonder that anti-Spanish agitation started, for instance, in the towns of Pola and Pinamalayan after the arrival of people from Taal and Marinduque.

In May 1898 there was a rumor going round the town of Bongabon that the Spaniards would investigate the activities and political views of the inhabitants. If they found out that there were people against the Spanish government, they would be killed. Shouting "oras na, mga kapatid," a group of Filipinos headed by Juan Naguit, from Cavite, armed with bolos and knives, some of them drunk, attacked the church of Suco [now Bongabon] during Mass on 22 May 1898. Both of the priests managed to escape, but two Spaniards were killed. News spread like wildfire from town to town. In the next few days, hundreds of Mindorenos headed by people from Cavite and Batangas and by members of the local elite rose in arms all over the island.\(^2\)

Around 1,000 revolutionaries attacked the provincial capital of Calapan in the beginning of June 1898. But they were beaten off by the Spaniards. Only after the arrival of more than 1,000 revolutionaries under the command of Colonel Alfonso Panopio from the province of Batangas, who joined forces with the Mindoro rebels, did the revolutionaries succeed in occupying Calapan. Finally, on 1 July 1898

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\(^2\) For more details, see the report of Father Ojeda.
Governor Rafael Morales surrendered to the Philippine revolutionaries. Immediately, a revolutionary government was inaugurated in Mindoro.3

As a result of the revolution the local elite stayed in power. But because the revolution was an imported one and had been successful only due to the support of revolutionaries from the provinces of Cavite and Batangas, members of those provincial elites were appointed to important political and military offices in Mindoro. Thus, Captains Ruperto Hernandez and Estanislao Cayton, both from Batangas, were in command of Mindoro’s revolutionary forces, and Daniel Sambong from Cavite and Ramon Atienza from Taal, Batangas, for instance, even became provincial governors. The revolution in Mindoro, as probably elsewhere in the Philippines, was not a social revolution all in all, but an anticolonial fight for independence. It is true that some “hominis novi” held local offices, but the local elite stayed essentially unaltered in power. They had been leading the fight against the Spaniards since 1898 in order to preserve their social status. Only the property of Spanish citizens and priests was confiscated by the revolutionary government. The properties of the rich, however, were not distributed among the people.

Immediately, the revolutionaries began organizing the administration of the island. Agustin Liboro was appointed governor, and Daniel Sambong military chief of the revolutionary forces. Owing to a restrictive right to vote—the number of actual voters in the barrios and towns only amounted to between 7 and 80—the provincial elite proved to be successful in the local elections. No significant social change in the political leadership of the province was discernable.

Because of the war against the United States (since February 1899), the military commanders became more and more influential in provincial politics. Thus, in April 1899 Captain Juan Morente from Pinamalayan was appointed provincial governor. He was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel M.A. Muñiz by order of the Supreme Commander of Southern Luzon, General Miguel Malvar, in November 1900. In the next few months there seemed to have been internal quarrels between the revolutionaries. It was reported that the new governor Manuel Alveyra from Lubang had been killed by some of his men. Unfortunately, however, I have not been able to discover any records to prove the reports. Whatever happened, in April 1901 at the latest, the Batangueño Lieutenant Colonel Ramon Atienza was appointed political and military leader of Mindoro.
Province and held that office until he was captured by American troops in September 1901.4

During the Philippine-American War Mindoro became a very important supply base and a retreat. The sale of the big cattle herd numbering over 5,000 heads in the San Jose Hacienda, which belonged to the Recollect Fathers before its confiscation by the revolutionary government, was one of the principal sources of the revolutionary government’s revenues.5 Until summer 1900, the revolutionaries shipped cattle from Mindoro and sold them in Manila, even to the Americans. Finally, U.S. troops set a trap for the revolutionaries. That meant a severe blow to their cause.

Since the Americans had started their campaign in the province of Batangas in January 1900, the Philippine authorities were afraid that Mindoro would be invaded by U.S. troops. As in all other coastal towns the inhabitants were seized with fear also in Bongabon. Precautions were taken:

Ng panahong yaon ay laging handa ang taga Bongabon, may bantay araw gabi sa tabing dagat, at pagkatanaw ng Bapor ay nagtatakbuhan sa gubat dahil sa takot sa Americano.6

Every ship entering or leaving the port was searched carefully by soldiers because the authorities were afraid of American spies or secret service men. For defending the island, however, only 200 soldiers of the “Battalion Mindoro” were ready for action. The first company was garrisoned in the provincial capital of Calapan, and the second company was deployed in several coastal towns. The government had made Filipino citizens between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five subject to conscription. The drafted recruits had only little training and were difficult to discipline. Moreover, they lacked ammunition and guns and were only poorly supplied with food and uniforms. Consequently, almost daily soldiers deserted.7

The Devastation of the Island (1901)

Until January 1901 the campaigns of U.S. troops had been successful in many areas of the Philippine archipelago. Emilio Aguinaldo, president of the Philippine Republic, was taken prisoner in March. In Batangas and in many other provinces, however, the revolutionaries harassed the U.S. forces with guerilla tactics. After the
occupation of northern Palawan in May 1901, Mindoro remained the only big island under complete control of the Philippine government.

The first U.S. expedition to Mindoro was a secret one. The aim was to free American prisoners. On 15 July 1901, seventy U.S. soldiers disembarked near Calapan and occupied the town without much resistance. They burned many houses, wounded several Filipinos, and killed twenty-five. How some of the Filipinos were massacred, was described by Pedro del Rosario, Calapan school teacher, in his diary:

y los diez individuos llevaron á la ribera del rio y ordeno que se pusieron en filas y agarradas de mano en mano unos y otros y arrojarse al rio en un mismo tiempo. Como así se los ordena hicieronle sin ninguna replica y se arrojaron todos. La crueldad de los sanguiñarios soldados Americanos en el momento de arrojar dispararon tiros de fusiles á cada uno. . . .

After boarding their ship, the Americans returned to Batangas.

The second expedition to Mindoro began on 27 July 1901. This time, 800 U.S. soldiers under the command of Major Evans were to invade the island and occupy it permanently. That was the general goal. The expeditionary force, however, had also to carry out a special mission: to capture or kill Arthur Howard, an American deserter, who was believed to have killed U.S. General Lawton on 19 December 1900. In this respect the Mindoro expedition was unsuccessful. Provincial Governor Ramon Atienza and Arthur Howard escaped and fled with their soldiers to the forests. Thus, Calapan was occupied without resistance by the U.S. forces on 29 July. Immediately, Major Evans appointed a new municipal government composed of Filipinos willing to collaborate. A detachment was sent to undertake an unrelenting pursuit of the Filipino soldiers still in the field. But that proved to be unsuccessful because the topography favored the Filipinos, who retreated to the swampy area in the vicinity of Lake Naujan. Thus, the Americans summarized the operation as follows:

The first expedition to Mindoro a few weeks ago was a success so far as giving the natives an idea that Uncle Sam was alive but from the late reports, the latest expedition was a failure and the despised native remains the master of the situation. (The Manila Freedom, 6 Aug. 1901, p. 1).
To keep the island of Mindoro under control, the U.S. troops were deployed in several coastal towns. From those garrisons they began their campaigns into the hinterland to eliminate the Filipino forces. Again, however, they were not successful. As a result, Major William J. Pitcher took over from Major Evans as commander of the occupation forces. To put an end to Filipino resistance, Major Pitcher resorted to concentration, or zone tactics, in which the inhabitants of certain districts were concentrated in a special place. The purpose was to prevent the civilian population from supplying the guerrillas. Then, U.S. troops started search and destroy operations. All those found outside the zones were in the danger of being accused as "insurgents," as the Americans called the Filipino soldiers, or as supporters of the "insurgents." They were killed on the spot. Everything that could possibly have been of value to the Filipinos in sustaining the war was destroyed or killed. All crops were burnt, carabaos and all livestock were slaughtered, barrios and even towns were reduced to ashes, and the drinking water was poisoned. In the aftermath, hundreds of innocent people died because of epidemics, especially cholera.

These brutal methods meant a severe blow to the revolutionaries. Owing to these drastic measures the people were compelled to seek subsistence at the various U.S. army posts. Moreover, an American commando took Arthur Howard prisoner by a surprise attack in the night of 24 August. Ramon Atienza managed to escape, but he and his staff were captured one month later. Resistance, however, did not crumble, to the surprise of the Americans. The pattern of resistance was now concentrated in the native districts of certain members of the local elite. In these strongholds, for example, Juan Morente in Pinamalayan or Deogracio Leyco in Abra de Ilog, they could rely on a network of personal relationships with their clients.

On both sides warfare became more and more brutal. Every time the U.S. forces moved forward on the few trails that existed on the island, they had to be extremely cautious because the Filipino guerrillas ambushed them and set traps for them. Almost every step of the way was guarded by man traps, bamboo spring knives, and other dangerous weapons. Quite often, the U.S. soldiers used Filipinos (even the Mangyan, the island's peaceful cultural minority, who did not take part actively in the war), instead of carabaos, to test if the trails were safe.

Captain Morente from Pinamalayan, for example, was made to surrender to the Americans because his family had been taken hos-
The Americans threatened, if he did not give up, to execute his entire family. The Filipinos struck back. According to political or personal animosities, the guerrillas raided towns or killed collaborating officials. A detachment under the command of Antonio Jalos, for instance, killed the municipal mayor of Pinamalayan, Camilo Umali. Others were able to enter towns under American control unharmed because they were close friends of the officials in charge. For example, Juan Naguit, municipal mayor of Bongabon, who had been one of the leading revolutionaries in 1898 and who, in the meantime, had pledged allegiance to the Americans, still offered assistance to Estanislao Cayton, captain of a revolutionary unit.

The American policy of burning, destroying, and killing bore fruit finally. By the end of the year 1901, almost all Filipino soldiers were captured and resistance crumbled more and more. The consequences for the people of Mindoro were horrible. The island was devastated. With the exception of Calapan and Paluan, all other towns were completely or almost completely wiped off the map—Naujan and Pola in August, Bongabon on 18 October, Mansalay on 25 October, Bulalacao, Ticling [now Roxas], Mamburao, and Sablayan at the beginning of November, Baco on 14 November, Abra de Ilog at the beginning of December, and Mangarin on 22 December. Even convents and churches were damaged or destroyed. The second half of the year 1901 had been the most disastrous for the island and its inhabitants since the Moro raids in the middle of the eighteenth century.12

The End of Filipino Resistance, 1902-1903

Even though the provincial capital of Calapan, which served as the U.S. headquarters, was not destroyed, the inhabitants had to suffer. In the first six months of the year 1902 Major Pitcher ordered the destruction of private properties, such as houses, gardens, or trees, to improve the provincial capital. In many cases the owners were humiliated because they themselves had to pull down their own houses. The materials were used by the U.S. soldiers for erecting storehouses and barracks, and for repair of the prison. All that happened with the assistance of the then collaborating municipal mayor, Toribio Gonzales. After Pitcher had been relieved of his duties at the end of June 1902, many citizens filed claims against Gonzales. He was sentenced to two years in prison.
A U.S. fact finding committee stated in 1906 that the damage had not been a military necessity. Calapan had not been in danger of an attack, nor even within the zone of military operations. The committee members concluded that the destructions had been carried out wantonly. Thus, the United States of America acknowledged eighty-one claims of Filipinos and US $11,500 were paid in compensation.¹³

Until May 1902 the U.S. army proved to be successful in eliminating, with one exception, all guerilla groups in Mindoro island. Pitcher's successor, Governor Captain Robert S. Offley, reported that one "armed band of ladrones" still existed. They were headed by one Valeriano Gasic, who was very popular and connected with important people on the island. During Spanish times, Valeriano Gasic y Ramos had been municipal mayor (presidente or capitán) of Naujan and later became justice of the peace (1896). He was supposed to be in league with the tulisanes living in the vicinity of Lake Naujan. He was very influential among them because he was believed to possess a special charm. By virtue of that charm, which was a little bronze image, it was said he could compel anyone to dance until he died of exhaustion or hunger. Gasic took part in the Philippine Revolution and was elected municipal mayor (punong bayan) of Naujan in September 1898.

The stronghold of the tulisanes around Lake Naujan also became the main area of resistance during the war against the Americans in Mindoro from 1901-1903. Gasic, as regional commander, was adored by his troops and by many civilians as "commander in chief, army of liberation of the military district of Mindoro" or as "el Gobernador de los montes." His headquarters were known as "the royal camp of the angels."¹⁴

Due to this adoration by his followers—as elsewhere in the Philippines, messianic dreams seemed to have been of importance in his case—Gasic did not surrender to the U.S. forces. The last six months of the year 1902 remained more or less peaceful. The Americans had already celebrated their victory. On 11 February 1903, however, the bloodiest attack during the war took place. Under the leadership of Gasic, 120 men raided the town of Naujan, the second largest on the island. All in all, 70 people were killed or wounded during the fight. The telegraph office was destroyed, and, apart from other things, the town seal, the American flag, and some town records were captured. After taking some prisoners, the rebels left Naujan. Accused of being "americanistas," four captives (Manuel Adeva, Elias Macalalad, Florentino Cortes, and Dalmacio Garubat) were brutally
murdered. American reinforcements arrived too late to capture Gasic and his men.

In spite of numerous campaigns, U.S. troops failed to eliminate Gasic's group. The authorities had to admit that Mindoro was still in a state of unrest, and they concluded that there would be trouble should Gasic's power continue. Finally, with the help of some local Mangyans, who were familiar with the area and who were offered a money reward, the Americans were successful. On 11 November 1903 Gasic and 170 of his men were captured in their hideout. Twenty-six months after the American invasion of Mindoro began, the fighting was over.

Gasic and his men were tried, resulting in the conviction of 112 men. U.S. Judge Linebarger sentenced Gasic and twelve of his companions to death in December 1903. Even Mindoro's most famous attorney, Macario Adriatico, could not help Gasic, but another man was able to help. Dean C. Worcester was Secretary of the Interior of the Philippines and the most powerful man in the archipelago at that time. Worcester arranged for Gasic's pardon by U.S. Governor General Luke E. Wright. Gasic was confined for life on 7 March 1905. The reason behind Worcester's intervention was that Worcester had visited Mindoro at the end of the nineteenth century and had become friendly with Gasic, the then municipal mayor of Naujan (presidente or capitan). Worcester's conduct was an affront to Governor Offley whose personal aim had been to imprison Mindoro's most dangerous "insurgent." Offley threatened to step down if Gasic was pardoned. The relationship between Worcester and Offley deteriorated drastically. Governor Offley finally stepped down in 1908. In March of the same year, Gasic died of tuberculosis on the island of Cuyo near Palawan.15

After Gasic's imprisonment, Mindoro became one of the most peaceful provinces in the Philippines. It still took the Americans, however, several years, until a number of new settlers could be induced to migrate to the sparsely populated island of Mindoro to open up new farm lands (see Schult 1991, 92-103).

Conclusion

Because of its isolation and backwardness, Mindoro was not in a state of unrest at the end of the nineteenth century. The outbreak of the Philippine Revolution on the island in 1898, was mainly due
to the agitation of people from the provinces of Batangas and Cavite. Thus, it was an imported revolution. As in other Philippine provinces, the elite emerged as the real victors of the revolution. But because the victory had been achieved only by massive support from outside, members of the local elite from Batangas and Cavite were appointed to important offices in Mindoro, such as military commander or provincial governor.

After its occupation by U.S. troops in July 1901, Mindoro was almost completely devastated by the Americans. All towns were burnt down, with the exception of Calapan and Paluan. The civil population was resettled in special zones and hundreds of people died due to epidemics. A fierce and brutal guerilla war, however, went on for more than two years. The focus of the decentralized resistance was the home districts of the local elite where they could rely on personal relationships with their farmers, and the stronghold of the tulisanes in Spanish times, which was in the vicinity of Lake Naujan.

At the end of the war, the local elite again emerged victorious because the Americans and the Filipino local elite entered into a symbiotic relationship. For political and administrative reasons, the Americans cooperated with the elite, even with those who had fought against their troops. The elite, on the other hand, collaborated with the Americans in order to preserve their social status.

Notes

1. Sturtevant (1976, 115 ff.); Hobsbawm (1959; 1981); Soler (1896); San Vicente (1897); Ojeda (1897); Laborda (1898); letter of Father Sanz, Magaran, 23 October 1897, APAR Sec. 1st-Leg. 54-Nro. 1; Ruiz (1901); Worcester (1899, 362 ff.).

2. To name but a few: in Bongabon/Pinamalayan: Juan Naguit, from Cavite, Gaudencio Isler, and Francisco Manalaysay, also from Cavite; in Bacol: Cervulo Lerterio; in Pola: Miguel and Estanislao Cobarrubias; in Paluan: Mariano Abeleda and Agustin Liboro. Unfortunately, we have no specific information concerning the motives and goals of the local elite and the people for participating in the uprising (apart from the general statement of apathy against Spanish tyranny) and how the agitators from other provinces convinced the Mindoreños to take part in the revolution. Isler (1952), Historical Data Papers [HDP] vol. 72, “Bongabon,” “Naujan”; further examples in: HDP, 72, “Baruyan,” “Silonay”; 73, “Pinamalayan”; 74, “Sablayan”; Landicho (1952, 441 ff.; 494); Nicasio (1958); Maribao (1986, 4).

3. Letters: Father Ovejas to Father Sádaba, Bulalaca, 21 May 1897; Father Tarazona to Father Provincial A. Ferrero, Manila, 13 Jan. 1897; Father Provincial A. Ferrero to Gov. Morales, Manila, 21 Dec. 1897, in: APAR 1-54-1; Letters: Father Sanz
to Father Sádaba, Mangarin, 2 Feb. 1897; to Father Secretario, Magaran, 15 June 1897; to Father Procurador, Magaran, 23 Oct. 1897; to Father Secretario, Magaran, 7 Nov. 1897, in: APAR 1-54-1; Varios papeles anónimos, sin fecha, sobre la situación de Mindoro, . . ., APAR 1-53-3; Ojeda (1896); Ruiz (1898); Sastron (1916(?), 48 ff); Taylor (1971, 44–45); HDP (72, 74); Armas (1956, 160–62); Nicasio (1985); Agpalo, R. (1972, 36–37); Postma (1979, 26ff.; 1981, 69–71).


6. [“During that time everyone was on the alert in Bongabon. Day and night guards were on duty on the beach. When a ship could be seen in the distance, they [the inhabitants] fled into the jungle because it could have been an American ship,” author's transl.], R. Isler (1952).


8. [“Ten persons were taken away and brought to the side of the river, where they were told to line up and hold each other’s hands and to jump in the river at the same time. They complied with the order without comment and jumped in the river. How cruel of the cold blooded American soldiers to shoot at those persons at the moment they jumped down,” translated by A. Postma (1981, 72ff.), Father del Rosario, unpubl. diary, Calapan, 1916(?); The Manila Freedom, 17 July 1901, p. 1.

9. The word “collaboration” is defined in this text simply as “to cooperate with an enemy” and no pejorative connotation is implied.


11. Arthur Howard was tried by court-martial. He denied all accusations of being a deserter and of being responsible for the killing of General Lawton. He claimed that he had been living in the Philippines over ten years, had never been in the U.S. Army but had been a soldier of fortune. The authorities could not offer evidence about his real identity and believed Howard’s statements in the end. Thus, he was completely exonerated. During spring 1902 the province of Batangas, a province that had been a center of revolutionary activity since the war’s beginning, was in a state of severe unrest. Because of Howard’s intimate knowledge of the Filipino army, the U.S. authorities accepted his offer to join the American troops in Batangas. Howard rendered valuable services to the Americans and was promoted chief of Scouts, The Manila Freedom, 27 Aug. 1901, p. 1; 22 Sept. 1901, p. 1; 25 Sept. 1901, p. 1; 12 Nov. 1901, p. 1; 22 April 1902, p. 1; 2 May 1902, p. 1; The Manila American, 25 Sept. 1901.
p. 1; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington D.C., Record Group (RG) 395-Entries 3313, 3332.


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