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Jesuit Mission Policies in the Philippines: 1859-1899

JOSÉ S. ARCILLA, S.J.

In the spring of 1871, Fr. José Ma. Lluch, S.J. arrived in Manila with extraordinary faculties of special visitor of the Philippine Jesuit Mission. The Jesuits had been reestablished in Spain in 1814, but they returned to the Philippines only in the summer of 1859. Two years later, in 1861, they opened their first mission in Tamontaka in south central Mindanao. Within the next ten years, they spread to the coastal areas, although by 1871, they had not yet reached the Pacific zone. However, in the next six or seven years, they would be opening the mission of Caraga and Cateel. In Manila, they were administering a boys' school and a teacher-training institute to prepare the teachers sorely needed all over the archipelago.

It seemed quite natural, therefore, that the central Jesuit office in Rome should send a visitor to the Philippines now that the Jesuits had been reestablished there after their expulsion in 1768. On the basis of his findings, the superior general of the Society of Jesus would be in a better position to make provision for the future.

Arriving in the middle of April in Manila, Lluch was immediately faced with the unpleasant fact that not everyone in the Philippines was happy with the Jesuits. This was not something new. Already in 1859, during their first official call on Archbishop José de Aranguren of Manila, the Jesuit superior, Fr. José Fernandez Cuevas, was told in no uncertain terms that they were best out of the city and in Mindanao. "He received me," Cuevas wrote, "rather coldly, and manifested his desire that we do not stay in Manila, but that we go and assume charge of the parishes which the Recollects (his brothers) administer in Mindanao . . . I am convinced we shall meet with opposition from him in every undertaking we have in mind."¹

1. José Fernández Cuevas to the provincial superior of the Jesuit province of Aragon, Manila, 10 November 1859: Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), *Philippinae*,

The treatment Cuevas received in the prelate's office was not an isolated incident. Quite the contrary. In the first ten years after the Jesuits returned, adverse criticism of their work had grown sharper. They were accused of doing nothing, that they had reported few adult conversions, even fewer infant baptisms, and had founded a limited number of Christian settlements or towns. The thinking was that since they had been sent and funded by the royal treasury, some evidence should have been forthcoming to show how they were implementing the government project re-settling and christianizing the native mountain tribes in Mindanao.² But how the Jesuits rated in the official view is reflected in a *Memorandum* of the district governor of Zamboanga, dated 20 August 1870:

despite the holy zeal of the Jesuit Fathers, not a single Muslim embraces Christianity. Conversions among the mountain people are few and superficial, and most of them due to allurements and gifts rather than to preaching of the gospel. Once the local government had to intervene to reunite the fleeing pagans who had deserted the settlements to escape the missionaries.³

Far from denying these charges, Lluch used the occasion to call attention to the fact that the Jesuit missions in southern Mindanao would always be slow and "unfruitful." It would be years before any progress could be noted, since they were located in the midst of Muslims who "almost exclusively inhabit the south . . . keep under their yoke the few mountain tribes from whom they exact tribute."⁴ Enemies of both the Spanish crown and the Christian faith, they were a constant threat not only to the growth of the missions, but also to the rest of the Philippines.

1001-I, 4. Fr. Juan Vidal also wrote his brother in Spain: "el Sr. Arzobispo no está ni por misiones ni por ejercicios; así es que tenemos las manos atadas." Vidal to his brother, Don Agustín Vidal, Manila, 6 October 1859: Archivo de la Provincia Tarraconense de la Compañía de Jesús (Ata), E-II-a-1.

2. It was part of Spanish colonial policy to open new Christian mission settlements and erect them into civil towns not only in order to spread the Christian Gospel, but also to augment the number of tributes collectable by the Spanish Crown (see José S. Arcilla, "The Jesuits and the Native Tribute in Mindanao, Philippines," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* [Immensee] 34 [1978]: 131, n. 1).

3. *Apuntes sacados de una memoria del Sr. D. Ramón Blanco, Gobernador P.M. de Mindanao*, 26 de agosto de 1870: Ata, E-II-b-88.

4. Letter of Lluch to the assistant to the general, in Colección Pastells, CXI (1852-1887): Ata, Documento 32. This was edited by Leandro Torno Zanz in *Misionaria Hispanica* 30, 90 (September-December 1973): 335-48.

This same difficulty had already been voiced by the Jesuits even before Fr. Lluch. It was only in obedience to an order from the Manila government that they had opened their first mission in Tamontaka in south central Mindanao, instead of in the north, as they had originally planned. There, where Islam had not reached, they had hoped to found Christian settlements or model farming colonies to serve as centers of a future Christian society, whose influence would spread and attract the unbaptized hill tribes around and, possibly, the Muslims themselves.⁵ But they had been given no option. In 1861, they had to go where fighting had erupted between the government troops and the Muslims. The newly appointed regional governor of Mindanao, Don José Garcia Ruiz, had asked to bring along with him to his new post some Jesuit missionaries who, he hoped, would stabilize the area.

THE MUSLIM PROBLEM

Unwittingly, perhaps, Fr. Lluch had put his finger on a key problem of southern Mindanao when he mentioned the negative influence of the Muslims. The Jesuits had come to know from experience that the hostility of the former was "implacable," and they concluded that a strong-arm policy would boomerang on their missionary efforts. The Madrid government, however, on the recommendations of an exploratory commission that had surveyed the area in 1854-55, had approved sending troops to the Pulangi River, the heart of the Magindanao confederacy in Mindanao, evidently hoping to take advantage of the intertribal factions among the various sultanates along the river bank of the Pulangi.

The Jesuits tried to make the best out of a less than ideal situation. This explains why the early correspondence between the missionaries in southern Mindanao and the Jesuit superior in Manila contains much detailed discussion of how they could spread the Christian gospel farther in spite of the known hostility of the Muslims. Some of the most detailed reports came from Fr. José Guerrico. Written in 1862, after only a year's experience among the Tiruray of Tamontaka, they reflect a common opinion

5. This is evident in practically all the early letters of the first Jesuits who returned to the Philippines and which are preserved in the Jesuit provincial archives in San Cugat del Valles.

among the Jesuits who came after him. But when these letters were written, it was only Fr. Guerrico who openly sponsored these ideas.

First of all, he wrote, one should have the proper attitude and disposition in order to work among the Muslims. Their conversion was going to take a long time, but it was not impossible. There was no reason to lose hope. The Magindanao Muslims were not as fanatical as those in Arabia and other countries, because the local climate and their natural character seemed to have modified their religious zeal. With patience, effort, "above all, with God's grace, the labors of the missionaries will not be fruitless," he insisted. If the Jesuits were convinced of this, they would take heart, while the contrary attitude "discourages, diminishes or kills their ardor."⁶

Secondly, on every occasion, the missionary should seek the good of the Muslims. He should take advantage of all the chances that he finds, he must even create them, since the Muslims were also a "partial objective of our mission." At least, in preparation for the future, the Jesuit should do what he can. But one must begin by "loving them." If one loves them, Guerrico continued, inevitably, "we shall speak affectionately with them when we see them and show in our face, our words, etc. a real concern for them. And little by little, we will win their confidence."⁷

This Jesuit believed that benevolence toward the Muslims would win over not only those with whom the missionaries would be in direct contact, but also the others who might hear of the kind treatment received from the missionaries, thus preparing them for the time when in God's plan they would be ready for the Christian gospel. Opportunity to win the friendship of the Muslim chiefs and leaders should not be wasted. When among the mountain tribes the Jesuits should weigh their words when speaking about the Muslims "as if what they say would reach" the latter. The missionaries should also strive to master the Muslim dialect and speak in their idiom because language was a powerful means to win them and a "great need" of the Jesuits.

It was common opinion, even among the Jesuits, that no one could hope for anything from the Muslims, and that it was useless

6. Guerrico to the superior, Tamontaka, 28 November 1862: Ata, *Cartas inéditas*, F-97.

7. *Ibid.*

to try to do something for them; at least, it would hinder the greater good that could be done for others. For the Muslims, as Guerrico himself was forced to admit, "will show themselves friendly when people are good to them; but most likely, they will show their true colors" when the opportunity comes.

The way this missionary handled this argument shows the kind of a man that he was:

I will not deny that there may have been or may be or can be in the future betrayals by Muslims, and, being Muslims, it is not surprising at all. Indeed, one has always to take that into account. But not for that do I believe that one ought to give up trying to settle or convert them. No one abandons a battle because of the danger of an ambush, nor the sentinel his post because he could be shot. What that implies is that the necessary precautions should be taken, lest one be surprised, so that, one by one, the dangers are removed, etc. If one talks of leaving the Moslems be as they are, neither striving to win them over nor improving or transforming them into another people by the gentle but powerful force of our holy religion, integrating or linking this with their temporal well-being; if one looks on them and treats them, not with suspicion and as though they were enemies, but with true affection and charity and as brothers in Jesus Christ who saved and wants to save them, like us; I believe there is no reason to be so skeptical and fearful.⁸

From personal experience, Guerrico had known the almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of settling and converting the Muslims. When he arrived in Mindanao, the traditional hostility between them and the Spaniards had not abated in the slightest, and he had come to realize that one could leave or travel some distance from the military camps of Tamontaka or Cotabato only at the greatest risk of his life. There had been attempts to raze the encampments on several occasions and the Muslims had once tried to burn the mission house. This did not surprise him at all. What was surprising, he pointed out, was that the "results have not been worse or of greater extent." For, if the Muslims were as ferocious and dreadful as portrayed and wanted to harm them, nothing could have stopped them.

Guerrico did not agree that the Muslims were "such a dreadful race." On arriving at Tamontaka, some of the subjects of the friendly Muslim Datu Bansil had volunteered to help construct

8. *Ibid.*

their mission house, such that Brother Zumeta, the overseer of the construction, had openly acknowledged that he would not mind working among the Muslims if they were all like his helpers. The difficulty, the Jesuit priest noted, was that people saw "everything black" in the Muslims. They were prejudiced in their judgments, calling as proofs things that were not true. Someone, for example, took it for malicious illwill that their boats sailed along the farther bank of the river at some distance from the houses. But, on being questioned, the pilot explained that the current there was slower. Quite a normal thing, Guerrico explained, "because of a bend on that side upstream, which pushed the water stronger on our side and weakened its flow on the other."⁹

Guerrico, then, much ahead of his time, did not see the Muslim problem in such dark colors, and always entertained the hope of working with success for the conversion of the Muslims, "especially," he wrote, "if we go with the government and its lower officials along the same road leading to this end, following a common policy and employing the proper means together."

We cannot say how influential Guerrico's letters were when he wrote them. But it is clear that there was no "common policy" for southern Mindanao. Between the Jesuits and the government officials in Mindanao, seldom was there agreement, the missionaries being concerned with their missions, the officials with their administrative tasks. But as to a common policy on the Muslim problem in southern Mindanao, there was none. In 1863, Cuevas had briefed the government on the danger of a power vacuum in Magindanao after it had deposed the traditional datus and sultans:

No rules have been formulated for them which they could use to guide them in their relations with us, nor was it made clear just what their duties and rights were. We have caused their hierarchic structure to flounder and humbled their sultans and datus, but we have not substituted any system of government.¹⁰

Significantly, Cuevas had also warned against any forcible change of their religion, insisting on a policy of attraction, although there was one problem which he was not prepared to resolve. If the Muslims were integrated with the rest of the Philippine colony

9. *Ibid.*

10. Fernández Cuevas, "Viaje a Zamboanga y al Rio Grande de Mindanao en 1863: Ata, *Cartas inéditas*, F-97.

and treated as vassals of the Catholic King of Spain, would they be allowed to preserve their social and political traditions? Could the Spaniards tolerate "in the midst of a Spanish and Catholic population" the practice of polygamy? What about slavery?¹¹

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Among the government circles, unfortunately, there was only one approach to the Muslim problem: frighten them into submission by the use of military power, and occupy the conquered land with military detachments around which new Christian settlements would be established. That this plan failed is clear from the *Memorandum* submitted in 1867 to the governor-general of the Philippines by Fr. Juan Vidal.

For the last five years, Vidal pointed out, military detachments had been stationed at various points in southern Mindanao, but none of them had attracted the people to settle nearby, as had been the intention. Instead, part of the Muslim population had fled farther away and, although there was about 2,000 apparently friendly Muslims who traded in the market square, these had built their houses at a distance from the camps. The few who lived in Cotabato were mainly deportees and prisoners from other provinces doing their time, one or two Spaniards, and several Chinese retailers who owned the stores selling dry goods and food.¹²

The Jesuits had always insisted that there were better places in Mindanao where missions should be opened, and that the military forces not only did not attract the people, but created enemies for themselves. But the missionaries had to accede to the govern-

11. *Ibid.*

12. Vidal wrote: "¿Qué sucedió pues con tanto ruido de armas y ataques? Sucedió que se gastaron muchos millones, que se perdieron muchos hombres por las enfermedades y otras desgracias, que se alejaron más los pretendidos enemigos sin haber reducido a uno siquiera; pues aunque muchos se llaman amigos y reducidos, nunca han querido vivir con la tropa en el sitio ocupado, sino a cierta distancia a su manera, a lo salvaje. Más aún, no se dejó a la Misión de la Compañía libertad para comenzar sus tareas de reducción de infieles por el lugar que ella creía más a propósito, sino que se obligó ir con la tropa al Río Grande, y la tropa, esto es, las puras bayonetas, en vez de ayudar, estorban, en vez de atraer, retraen." Letter of Fr. Juan Vidal to the procurator stationed in Madrid, dated Manila, 22 May 1968: Ata, F-II-a-27; "Algunas observaciones sobre el estado de la parte sur de la isla de Mindanao en 1866, y el modo conveniente de colonizar," *Carta-informe del P. Vidal al Gobernador General de Filipinas*, Manila, 19 de mayo de 1867: Ata, *Colección Pastells*, CXI, documento 19 (unpaged).

ment, deceived by certain well-placed individuals, continued Vidal in his report, to send "two regiments to colonize the river after invading it." All to no avail. Soldiers did not evangelize, and neither were the people won over, nor were the missionaries allowed to work freely.¹³

What added to their frustrations was the fact that, after the riverine settlements had been taken over by the government troops, no plans to consolidate their hold were formulated. Military detachments were deployed at several places, while the Jesuits were forbidden to talk about religion to the Muslims until further dispositions could be sent to them. They honored the prohibition and that was the end of it. From Manila, no more directives came, save an order to stop further military incursions, except when they were certain of victory and it was absolutely necessary to keep the posts actually occupied by the soldiers. There had been talk about settling the tribes dwelling in the sector between Cotabato and Davao in order to link both points; but the plan was shelved because the Manila government had neither the interest nor the resources to carry it out.¹⁴

By 1876, there were still no policies issued by the government for Mindanao. The militarists still prevailed, and, for their part, the Jesuits continued their opposition to the use of force, always urging prudence and warning that, unless called for, it was both impolitic and self-defeating to declare war on the Muslims. Given the circumstances, they said, the latter had all the advantages. Any attempt at coercion would only add fire to the *rabia moruna*.

As the missionaries described it, the Muslims, launching out into the deep and armed in their particular manner, could easily disrupt communications between the islands. From their forest hideouts they could cross the mountains using trails known only to them, and take the Christians by surprise. In the past, when

13. Ibid.

14. Cf. Julián González Parrado, *Memoria acerca de Mindanao* (Manila, 1893), 14-15; Juan Salcedo, *Proyectos de dominación y colonización de Mindanao y Joló. Año de 1891*. Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (Madrid), Manuscript 161, páginas 192, 230-31; Ramón Blanco, *Memoria acerca del estado de la Provincia de Zamboanga, 1862-1871. Informe confidencial que el que suscribe eleva al Excmo. Sr. Capitan General en cumplimiento de lo que S.E. se sirvió encargarle en carta particular de 12 de junio*: Newberry Library (Chicago), Ayer Collection, Philippine manuscripts, 1303; Ladislao Nieto, *Mindanao. Páginas sueltas. Zamboanga, 1885-1886*: Ayer Collection, Philippine manuscript, 1384.

there had been less provocation, they had sailed as far north as Cagayan; what would they do now if they were attacked and they felt they were being exterminated? And, the missionaries warned, they had powerful weapons. Despite the supposed military superiority of the Spaniards, the Muslims knew how to fight on even terms. They knew the forest more intimately and, if cornered, would simply withdraw to the lakes and rivers where the bulky Spanish craft could not sail. Besides, by carrying the Spanish colors in their boats in accordance with the Marine regulations, they could easily pass for Christian Filipinos.¹⁵

Started in unfavorable circumstances, the Jesuit missions in southern Mindanao managed to expand nonetheless, although at an extremely slow pace. Fifteen years after the Tamontaka mission was inaugurated, the native hill tribes still hesitated to come down and live in the missions, out of fear of reprisals from the Muslims who had threatened to kill them if they sided with the foreign priests.¹⁶ Thus, in the annual Jesuit superior's report to the governor-general of the Philippines submitted in 1876, Fr. Lluch, who had become superior in the meantime, included the observation that there would have been more conversions to Christianity and the tribes would have gladly formed settlements had they not been so fearful. They feared what, in simple but unanswerable logic, they had repeated to all who were willing to listen to them and what, besides, had been verified by their experience and history itself.

The people, the report said, had asked several times what good it would do them to live in the Christian settlements. If they did, the Muslims would wait for the departure of the Spaniards to pounce on them. "We certainly would pay with our lives, we and our families," Lluch quoted them. Even if the troops were near by, what guarantee did they have that these would not be recalled in the future? The Tiruray, the tribe the Jesuits first evangelized in 1861, and about whom Lluch was writing, apparently still remembered how the missions fared when the Jesuits had been forced to leave Mindanao in 1768. Not only that; they had witnessed on many occasions the departure of the government troops

15. "Informe": Ata, *Colección Pastells*, CXI, documento 24 bis.

16. See José S. Arcilla, S.J., "The Return of the Jesuits to Mindanao," *Philippine Studies* 26 (1978): 16-34.

from places already taken from the Muslims and, as they kept telling the Jesuits, their "past experience assures us of what will happen in the future." They kept saying:

With the troops away, the Muslims will inflict on us what on other occasions they had inflicted on the tribes that had already settled in Christian communities. You will say that you are leaving with us the Spanish flag which the Muslims will respect. And in case they don't, we can call on the Spanish government to avenge the harm they shall have inflicted on us. This is our answer: better cannons and soldiers than a flag. The Muslims do not care in the least about the flag; but the soldier — him they respect indeed. Besides, why complain after one is dead?¹⁷

Understandably, some of the Jesuits believed that the conversion of the Muslims would occasion that of the hill tribes. It was hoped that, once christianized, the former would cease to be an object of fear for the latter. That the two could accept each other and live together was shown by the fact that the Tiruray and the other hill tribes spoke the Muslim dialect. As a matter of fact, the Tiruray themselves distinguished between "good" and "bad" Muslims. One, for example, who ate pork was a Muslim they trusted, ironically, since he was considered to be a nonpracticing Muslim, it being part of the latter's religious discipline to avoid this meat.¹⁸

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE HILL TRIBES

The conversion of the Muslims was actually only a secondary purpose of the Jesuits, for they had been sent to Mindanao to settle and christianize the hill tribes. They paid attention to the Muslim problem only because of its effect on their principal task. That is why the early Jesuit missionary reports are full of plans for a more efficient evangelization of the hill tribes.

Among the earliest reports is a letter dated 22 October 1862 written by Fr. Guerrico in answer to the superior's request for suggestions. In this letter, the missionary outlined a four-point plan for the settlement and christianization of the Tirurays of Tamontaka and the other hill tribes.

17. "Informe del R.P. Superior de la Misión de Filipinas al Señor Gobernador de dichas Islas, 1876": Ata, *Colección Pastells*, CXI, documento 24 bis.

18. Guerrico to the superior, Tamontaka, 28 November 1862; Tamontaka, 15 December 1862: Ata, *Cartas ineditas*, F-97.

The first point he wrote was to assure them that the missionaries were staying permanently in Mindanao. The expulsion of the Jesuits in the middle of the eighteenth century had been a harrowing experience to their ancestors, which was still "very much alive in the stories about their forefathers," the Jesuit wrote. To add to this, the Muslims had drummed it into their ears that the missionaries had arrived to give them small gifts and disarm them, and, when they least expected it, kidnap their wives and their children. That this was no idle tale to the Tiruray, Guerrico indicated, was due to the recent conquest of Davao by Oyanguran who had native fighters battling against the Muslims. Presumably, the Tirurays were made to believe that their sons would be sent to fight the Sulu Muslims.¹⁹

Secondly, Guerrico wrote, it would help if the government occupied certain sites which the Muslims were using as focal centers, although generally speaking, he cautioned that it was better if the hills were free of them. But there was no need, on the other hand, to provoke them by unwarranted efforts to dislodge them, especially since a number of them had already accepted Spanish sovereignty. Nothing would be gained by outraging their legitimate concerns, now that a more lasting agreement with them seemed possible.

The third was that several military detachments should be stationed at strategic locations, and the fourth was that the self-confidence and self-respect of the timid Tirurays should be fostered. As a start, the Jesuits missionaries should help them select their own residential lots, and provide them with the necessary resources and implements to start their own farms. They should be taught which seeds would yield the greater harvest, when to plant, which soil was best for tilling, etc. For no one would willingly change his lifestyle if his hopes were frustrated at the first try. And the rest had to see for themselves how the others fared before venturing out on a similar enterprise.²⁰

Written less than a year after he had arrived in Tamontaka,

19. Guerrico to the superior, Tamontaka, 22 October 1862: Ata, *Cartas ineditas*, F-97. On the conquest of Davao, see Pablo Pastells, S.J., *Misión de la Compañía de Jesus de Filipinas en el Siglo XIX* (Barcelona, 1916), 1: 90-91.

20. Guerrico to the superior, Tamontaka, 22 October 1862: Ata, *Cartas, ineditas*, F-97.

Guerrico's ideas already contained the basic elements of the later Jesuit policies for the missions. What is most impressive in these ideas is Guerrico's vision. We have already mentioned his "modern" attitude toward the Muslims. Guerrico's plan is remarkable also from this viewpoint, namely, that it calls for what we now describe as a "socioeconomic development" program aimed at humanizing before christianizing the tribes.

THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF MISSIONARIES

From the preceding discussion, we can see that the charges against the Jesuits and their "unproductive" missions in Mindanao were without solid ground. They expanded slowly, indeed, the southern missions much more slowly than the northern where Muslim influence had not penetrated. And to fully understand why, one must consider, to quote Fr. Lluch's report to Rome, the "number and qualifications of the missionaries." The Jesuits were both short of priests and brothers, and the few that were actually laboring in Mindanao were prone to sickness. As the report stated, "what can these infirm men do?"²¹ Nor were sufficient numbers enough. More importantly, each missionary should be a "holy man, very holy . . . dead to the world and exclusively dedicated to God's service."²²

But, first, sufficient numbers. This was basic to any missionary enterprise. A comprehensive plan could then be drawn up for the missions to make good use of their resources in men and in energy. But the Jesuits never had been able to muster enough priests or brothers for Mindanao. And yet, that island is what it is today because of the tireless and heroic Spanish Jesuits who, lacking in numbers and never in the best of health, gave their time and their lives to bring the Christian message there.

In the forty years from 1859 to 1899, the period when the Spanish Jesuit Province of Aragón sent missionaries to the Philippines at government expense, there were a total of thirty-seven mission groups that embarked either at Cadiz or Barcelona for Manila. These brought a total of 317 Jesuits, of whom 57 were scholastics, that is, Jesuits still in their preparatory studies before priestly

21. Lluch to the assistant, in *Missionalia Hispanica*, p. 345.

22. *Ibid.*

ordination. They were sent to teach at the two Jesuit schools in Manila, the *Ateneo municipal* and Escuela Normal, and therefore, were unavailable for direct ministry in the Mindanao missions. Of the rest, 115 were coadjutor brothers and 146 were priests. Besides the scholastics who did not go to Mindanao, a few more priests and brothers were also assigned to teach in the Manila schools. If we say that each mission group from Spain counted an average of 8 or 9 Jesuits, we can see that only about 5 or 6 of them could be expected to continue on to the missions in Mindanao. By all counts, this is a very small number, considering that replacements were always needed for the sick and for those who died, not to mention the opening of new missions elsewhere.

This dearth of missionaries is reflected in a letter of the provincial superior of Aragón to the Philippine mission superior:

The complaints of Your Reverence are quite justified, in view of the extraordinary and urgent needs you have there. Would the Lord that with the five priests . . . and five brothers you may be helped in your predicament. If subjects to send there did not have to be specially chosen, I could send not just six, but twelve more. Your Reverence knows that this must not be. And so, we are left with all who can be sent neither there nor to America. And even with those whom they send us back from both places, after assigning some of them . . . we regret we cannot satisfy our dear brothers overseas, even after closing [our houses in] Morella, Santa Fe, and the Residences of Zaragoza, Lérida, and Mahón.²³

The years brought no solution to the problem. One finds an extract of a meeting of the provincial superior's council held in October 1885 stating that the situation in the missions is summed up in a constant lament over the lack of subjects and its regrettable consequences. By 1892, the provincial of Aragón was writing to the Philippine superior in almost identical terms as the provincials before him: "The lack of personnel is the constant complaint that I receive from all places." Because of this, they had to set aside the needs of the Paraguay Mission and their plans to open new colleges in Spain. "Despite this," he continued, "I shall try to send all I can to your mission."²⁴

23. Letter of the provincial superior of the Jesuit province of Aragón to the superior of the Philippine mission, 14 October 1885: Ata, *Cartas de los Provinciales Para Filipinas*, F(60).

24. The Aragón provincial to the Philippine superior, 28 October 1885: Ata, *Cartas de Provinciales*, F-97; The Aragón provincial to the Philippine superior, 30 March 1892: Ata, *Cartas de Provinciales*, uncatalogued.

Was there any explanation for this shortage? Fr. Lluch, in the 1876 report he submitted to the Philippine government, included a well-reasoned out explanation for this shortage, writing in the process a mini-treatise on missiology.

In the first place, he began, there is a historical law by which great geniuses appear only once in a while. Not every generation produces a Christopher Columbus or a Hernan Cortes, men who shine like suns on the earth. The same thing is true in the Church. Not all missionaries are like Saint Francis Xavier. He was a prodigy and when something like him passes, it leaves others in its wake. Very few are originators, most are capable only of finishing what others have started. "We are, then," he concluded, "forced to acknowledge our weakness and the limits of our capabilities."²⁵ For this reason, precisely, one ought to provide the means by which missionaries could be properly trained, in order to be able to "offer consolation for the people from the cradle to the grave." Lluch then goes on to detail in a few sentences his concept of the role of the missionary in Mindanao.

We must remember that the Lluch report was partly an apologia for the Jesuit missions, and he had in mind the special circumstances of Mindanao in the last third of the nineteenth century. Two things are to be noted: an implied theology of mission, and the concrete application of his theory according to the particular needs of the Mindanao missions.

PORTRAIT OF MISSIONARY

Lluch first pointed to the need for leadership in the missionary. Besides his priestly formation, the latter must receive special training in public administration, since he was expected to "oversee the exercise of justice, to enlighten provincial chiefs and the leaders (*gobernadorcillos*) of the town where he ministers." This took time and years of study. Today, of course, we use a different word: we "conscienticize" the people of God, teach them their rights, help them to help themselves. But in essence, it was the same thing. It was the same fight for justice and freedom, the same concern lest those who wielded political power oppress the weak and the helpless. In nineteenth century Mindanao, the Jesuits

25. "Informe": *Colección Pastells*, documento 24 bis.

found the people still fragmented in several tribes or clan groups, and the first task was to reorganize their lives into stable communities that the missionaries felt would promote their christianization. They were introduced to community living and taught the difficult lesson of accepting public authority even when vested in persons who had never been their tribal leaders or blood relations. Obviously, there was no one in the missions to supervise their "social apprenticeship" in the new political situation other than the missionary, and so it became the latter's role to act as their political and social guide or counsellor.

The next point Lluch brought up was the need for a missionary who was a man of "proven virtue and uprightness." This was all the more essential, he believed in order that the latter might be able to carry out the task assigned to him, living in a very different climate and among people whose customs differed from his. One should never forget, he warned, that the missionary was sent to a country where the people's mentality, character and attitudes, their capabilities, and their history were unfamiliar to him. Otherwise, he would feel himself "surrounded by an obnoxious atmosphere such as could choke him."

Finally, the missionary to Mindanao should realize that there a "parish" or a "mission" was not the same as it was understood in Europe.²⁶

The Lluch report added that if in normal times, it was never easy to be a missionary, it was much less so in those years of chronic political turmoil in Spain, when the Jesuits had lost their houses and colleges through government confiscation.²⁷

Never with enough missionaries, the Christian towns in Mindanao saw the priest only once a year, if at all. Located at great distances from one another, linked by dangerous trails that became impassable during inclement weather, many newly baptized Christians died either without having received further instructions in their new faith or without the consolation of the last sacraments. Parents complained that their children did not understand their religion, since they themselves did not know enough to teach it. Fr. Martin Luengo, for example, one of the early missionaries in Mindanao, came upon several Christian settlements on the

26. *Ibid.*

27. Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939* (Oxford, 1966), esp. chapters 5-8.

northern coast where mass had not been celebrated for five years before the Jesuits returned in 1871. In 1876, he visited the Pacific coastal town of Cateel and discovered that the people had not had mass since an earlier visit he had made there in 1872. And in a small village called Pangayawan, two or three leagues from Alubijid, a seacoast town in the province of Misamis, the same Jesuit had met a man whose words disturbed him deeply: "The priest never used to visit us, and the gobernadorcillos neither built schools for us nor sent teachers to teach our children. We came here, to live near Alubijid, thinking they would have more sympathy for us. Unfortunately, they treat us in the same way."²⁸

No less problematic than the abandonment of the Christians in their towns was the loneliness of the missionaries themselves who lived far from one another. The Jesuits had been first faced with this difficulty when they first assumed charge of Basilan Island in 1861. The Jesuit assigned there lived alone by himself and had no one near him to serve as his normal confessor. Since then, it had become Jesuit policy in the Philippines to assign an extra priest to a residence or mission district, who would substitute for whoever was absent or ill, at the same time that he acted as the spiritual father and confessor of the missionaries. Ideally this man was expected to be more prudent, more discrete, someone in whom the Jesuit brothers and priests could confide, someone who had the breadth of mind and soul to console his brethren in moments of trial and discouragement. The Jesuits quickly learned that such men were rare and hard to find.

To minimize these difficulties, rules and instructions were drawn up for the houses in Mindanao. It was hoped that the rules would, besides obviating the difficulties of a solitary life, help the Jesuits in their relations with the people and the authorities in Mindanao.

JESUIT MISSION POLICIES

The first set of instructions of this type had been formulated by Fr. Fernández Cuevas on the eve of the departure of the first missionaries to Mindanao in 1861. Written in five parts, their

28. See the letters he wrote, especially those dated at Gingoog, 10 July 1872; Jasaan, 25 August 1875; Butuan, 29 August 1875: Ata, *Cartas ineditas*, Box F-97. Fr. Luengo narrates that when he first appeared on the shore of Butuan, the people were terrified, and about to turn to the hills, but when assured that he was a priest, they told

purpose was to remind them that they were Jesuit missionaries, above all, men of God, members of a religious order. The first part touched on the importance of fidelity to their traditional spiritual practices in the Order, like "prayer, meditation, spiritual reading and examination of conscience which are the food of the soul." Another part prescribed that "with regards to their ministries, their principal concern should be to learn the languages of the inhabitants in order to be ready as soon as possible for the work of converting them to the faith." The Jesuits were to offer mass and their other prayers for the people and should be especially careful not to baptize against the will of the parents of pagan children who lived under the *patria potestas* and had not reached the age of reason, except in "urgent need." Attention was called to the possibility of ransoming, "of course with extreme prudence and discretion, slave children in order to bring them up in a Christian way." In dealing with the Spaniards, they should be very "circumspect and their manner dignified, and they should avoid criticizing the authorities, not favoring any of the factions that usually exist, not meddling nor concerning themselves with any purely civil question and much less seeking employment for their friends, and others of the same kind." Social gatherings were not allowed in their houses which were not to be open as stopping places or inns for travelers passing through. Finally, to the pleasant surprise of everyone, it was strictly enjoined upon them that, since their houses were under papal cloister, no women were under any pretext allowed to go up or enter the main floor (*piso*), for which reason the door should always be "meticulously closed."²⁹

These instructions are important not only in themselves, but also from a historical viewpoint. They tell us how the Jesuits looked on themselves and their role in Mindanao. They were neither colonizers nor state officials, neither military conquerors nor traders. They were Jesuits, men dedicated to the service of God in the Church, missionaries responsible for the spread of the Christian gospel and for leading the people on the road to salvation. They were part of a team under the direction of their religious

him: "Tú eres el primer Padre que ha estado aquí." It might be good to add that Luengo refused to credit the man's tale at face value. All he wrote, he said, was what he had heard from the man's lips, and he did not want to make any judgments.

29. See Ata, E-II-a-27. As will be noted, these instructions are in keeping with the Jesuit missionary tradition.

superiors, all of them dedicated to the spiritual task of converting the people, a task which demanded integrity of character and a strong faith.³⁰ In the words of Fr. Juan Vidal, one of the early superiors of the Philippine Jesuits and himself one of the four founding missionaries of Tamontaka, among them there was no distinction between the missionary and the religious, and their actions should show that they were working only for God. They should never do anything, initiate anything without the superior's approval; otherwise, they would "cease to be a religious missionary of the Society of Jesus."³¹

This was the early policy of the Jesuits. As the years went by, and their missions spread, they continued to seek and formulate better plans for the settlement and christianization of the hill tribes of Mindanao (and, if possible, the Muslims also). The superior's annual visitation of the missions was traditionally the occasion to evaluate their own work. Unfortunately, we do not have all the reports which could have allowed us to enter into their yearly examination of their corporate missionary conscience. The few we have, however, give a good indication of their plans. Usually, too, the later documents include, implicitly if not explicitly, the earlier plans of previous years.

THE RICART REPORT

Perhaps the most important text that contains the Jesuit mission program in Mindanao in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, is the official report of Fr. Juan Ricart, superior of the Philippine Jesuits, and presented to the government on 27 January 1885.³² It is a brief summary of the work of the Jesuits in Mindanao up

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.* The Lluch report to Rome indicated another cause for the slow progress of the missions in Mindanao, namely, the insidious example and scandalous lives of the prisoners and deportees to Mindanao, and the immorality of the Spaniards themselves living in the south. The latter's religious indifference was especially pernicious, because being of the same race as the missionaries, their sinful living was real scandal that belied the words of the priests who were hard put to explain to the native tribes why religion did not seem so important to their fellow Spaniards.

32. Pastells, *Misión*, 3: 477. This report was published and won from the governor-general of the Philippines and the Queen of Spain a decree praising the work of the Jesuits in Mindanao. See "Reales ordenes que aprueben y alaban nuestra Mision de Filipinas en general y el Método seguido en la reducción del Tercer Distrito de Mindanao por nuestros misioneros, Manila, 8 de junio de 1885": Ata, E-II-a-27.

to that time and, even if it refers mainly to the northeastern region of the island where the Muslim influence had never been felt, this report shows what the Jesuits considered to be the best way to evangelize Mindanao. Even after Fr. Ricart's time, this plan served as the point of departure for the later missionaries from Spain. We can then consider it as the basic text of the Jesuit plan for their Mindanao missions.³³

The report was drawn up after the annual visit to the northeastern missions, and it began by assuring the government that the settlement of the mountain tribes there was "already a reality." This implied two complementary tasks, according to Ricart. The first was the gathering together of the families scattered throughout the hills and mountains and relocating them at convenient sites. Here they were given their individual residential lot and its corresponding farm with which they were gradually accustomed to a *settled* life, while awaiting the next harvest and even saving some of it for the coming years. A church was built for them, with its furnishings – e.g., bell, missal, chalice, altar vestments, statues, etc. – provided by the government. With government help and encouragement, too, roads, bridges, schools, the town hall were built.

This material structure was given life by drafting for them a simple "code of law" that explicated the social obligations of every town dweller – their mutual relations with one another, the duty of subjects to obey legitimate authorities, even when not related to them by blood ties (which they were accustomed to in their tribal structure), and the obligation of those in authority to come to the aid of the weak. Parents were instructed to teach their children in the Christian faith, and everyone was admonished to work for a living.³⁴ These laws were actually an effort to organize into a wholesome pattern their hitherto unstructured existence. For houses, roads, schools, town halls, and churches are the external framework, the external dress, or the *locale* without which a community does not have an identity. And, in the final count, it is by means of these material elements that a town lives. The Jesuit missionaries naturally strove to remove all traces of local religious practices, but it did not imply stifling the natural desire

33. "Relacion sobre las Reducciones de infieles en el distrito de Surigao, presentada al Gobierno General en 27 de enero de 1885, por el Superior de la Mision de la Compañia de Jesús, el P. Juan Ricart," in Pablo Pastells, *Misión* 3, Apéndice, Documento 9.

34. "Relación sobre las Reducciones," 471.

of the people for a cult or religion. Rather, in the words of Ricart, it was an effort to lead them away from their "inhuman and barbarous" practices and introduce them to others that would ennoble their attitudes and values, offer them new goals to motivate them to seek a better life. In a word, town laws were aimed at the evangelization, the conversion, the planting of the Church in their midst.

From experience, the Jesuits realized that until the majority of the people in the settlement were baptized, they had no guarantee that the new community would last. Religion, Ricart continued in his report, was the "simple yet powerful means of transforming those savages into loyal subjects of Spain . . . the means by which they cast aside their barbaric traditions."³⁵

Evangelization, then, was a process of acculturation, a conversion, that is, a refinement of material life that should accompany the purification of the heart. This was, for most of the tribes, quite a radical change. As a Jesuit missionary observed, as long as a man remained a pagan, his acts were governed by instincts and habits born of superstition and ignorance; once baptized, however, he knew he had to change his ways. He could not continue to be a Manobo or Mandaya and still be a true Christian. He dropped his tribal appellation and, in a few years, he was integrated into the Christian population.

This was not a hypothetical theory for the missionaries, but the reality of their life in Mindanao. There was, for example, the case of an old lady who delayed receiving Christian baptism because she could not bring herself to discard the traditional dress of her tribe. It was not the missionary who had insisted on that. Her companions, newly baptized themselves, had been the ones who had insisted that Christian baptism meant a change of *vestido y vida*. Another incident occurred in a new town with the rather symbolic name of Alba (Dawn), where the missionary had been summoned after some gory assassinations. He succeeded in talking with the murderers who entertained him with the details of that whole bloody day. If one heard them without understanding their language, the Jesuit remarked, he would have imagined they were describing some such innocent thing as taking a nap after a sump-

35. *Ibid.* There is more truth to this than appears at first sight, for life really is what a man's options and values are.

tuous meal in the middle of the day. And asked if their actions were good or bad, one of them became silent for a few minutes and finally answered, "bad . . . Father, *pabunag kami* (we want to be baptized)." And a third case, among many others, concerned two brothers, the younger of whom was engaged to marry the girl he loved. The older brother enticed her to sleep with him. In their tribal code, this was punishable by death. But the younger brother went up and told the older boy that he was "ashamed" of him and that, disgusted at so much wickedness, he had decided to leave his family to be baptized and live as a Christian.³⁶

What do all these mean? That, for the native hill tribes, settlement in a Christian town meant a radical reorientation of one's thinking and a new start in life guided by now the evangelical rather than the natural law. It was precisely because of this that the missionaries complained about the scandalous living of the old Christians. It was also this that held back some of the hill people, thinking that religion was something deeply imbedded in one's nature, like one's racial origins, and therefore, something that divided them as individual tribes. In other words, to them religion was not something that involved only external acts of worship, but something deeply ingrained in one's person.

And so, one sympathizes with the Jesuits who advocated a policy of attraction in their missions. They were concerned with the good of the people, while for the government officials, the important thing was the inclusion of Mindanao, after three frustrating centuries of unresolved fighting, within the effective jurisdiction of the Philippine colonial government. The Jesuits did not altogether rule out the use of force. Even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they saw from experience that guns and soldiers were a solid protection against the enemies of the Christian settlements. What they disapproved was the use of military force to convert the people to Christianity.

It was, then, a delicate question of when the use of guns was defensive and when it was coercion. With the various tribes in the hills, some of them friendly, others rather hostile, the need was

36. The Jesuit letters are full of these episodes. See, for example, the letter of Fr. Canudas to the superior, Butuan, 23 September 1888, in *Cartas de los PP. de la Compañía de Jesús de la Misión de Filipinas* (Manila, 1877-95), Cuaderno 8, 360. At the same time the Jesuits hoped to completely "isolate the Moslems" among themselves by their missions and model farm settlements.

for a system to establish a permanent civil and religious society in Mindanao. Depending on how friendly or inimical a group or region was, the proper method would be chosen. As Ricart suggested in his report, in areas dominated by the hostile Muslims, military detachments were necessary to protect the farming colonies that the Jesuits planned to organize as centers of Christianity.³⁷ Where the people were friendly, the sole presence of the missionary sufficed, provided he was supported by the local government in his material needs. Where the hill tribes were independent of any Muslim influence, the missionary would be enough, although once in a while, he may have occasion to call on the assistance of the local government. And finally, for those who lived under the authority of the Muslims, both a military detachment and a farming colony would be necessary: the detachment to protect those who might wish to live in the farming colony once they were emancipated from their masters.

CONCLUSION

All of these plans started from the same principle, namely, that the work of settling and christianizing the tribes of Mindanao should not be carried out through violence, but through a policy of attraction. As a Jesuit wrote, in the Philippines, the help of the missionary was indispensable. But in Mindanao

any attempt to colonize or settle independently of the Christian initiative is to build on air. And even if this were possible, such reductions or settlements, besides being prejudicial to the interests of the government, would by their lack of cohesion, not last. Ask a Moslem *juramentado*, or a Manobo *bagani*, or any Bagobo from the slopes of Mount Apo, why he offers as a sacrifice to his gods the dead body of his fellow human being. They will answer that it is thus demanded by Mohammed, or Busao, or Darago. Thus, it is impossible to civilize them as long as they continue in their old religion. It is therefore necessary to substitute for their barbaric cult the gentle yoke of the Christian religion.³⁸

37. "Informe sobre la isla de Mindanao presentada al Excmo. Sr. Gobernador General de Filipinas, D. Valeriano Weyler, por el Superior de la Mision de la Compañia de Jesús, el P. Pablo Pastells," in Pastells, *Misión*, 3, Apéndice, Documento 11, 478-79.

38. "Informe sobre la isla," 482-83.