

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGINALS, THE SETTLERS, AND THE NLSA: IN THE FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY

This chapter is the story of the meeting of various cultures which for purposes of typology is dubbed in this work as the originals referring to the indigenous peoples, the Magindanaos and the Blaan; the migrant-settlers; and the NLSA employees and the consequent accommodation and interaction they underwent resulting to a new community largely defined by the three interacting groups. The meeting of the three groups could also be seen as the meeting of two worlds - the more modern world of the newcomers and the traditional world of the original inhabitants of the place.

While such meeting may not be completely devoid of tension, the “boom-town-in-the-making” of the fifties and today’s “boom city of the south” before the infamous bombings, which rocked the city in 2001, indicates a successful process of accommodation and interaction. This chapter, however, only deals with the initial process of interaction since three years of settlement life before the war was too short to fully appreciate the social processes involved in the interaction of varying cultures. However, no one particular group, not even the newcomers with their more modern ways, could claim the sole credit in the formation of the new community for a community is essentially a product of the interaction of people in a given geographical zone. While Buayan (the old name of General Santos City) may have only few inhabitants at the time of the coming of the migrants, it was the original inhabitants’ reaction to the newcomers and the consequent relationship that they evolved which largely defined the character of the new community.

A. *The Encounter of Cultures*

The beautiful and vast expanse of Koronadal with its varying topography and vegetation became the home ground of both the Muslims and the Lumads. This ecological environment served to nurture and allows the development of a rich cultural heritage among the indigenous peoples of Cotabato unhampered by Western influence until the turn of the 20th century.

The coming of the Christian settlers brought into contact two different worlds - the Westernized Filipinos and the indigenous Malay world of the Muslims and Lumads. The more advanced legal and technological knowledge of the settlers coupled with government support in the form of farm implements, food, medicines, hospital, technical advice and the like placed the newcomers at an advantage in this encounter of the interacting cultures. A brief description of the interacting cultural groups is necessary to understand the distinct community that evolved in Koronadal Valley.

1. *The Original Inhabitants of the Valley*

To the Muslim groups, Southern Koronadal was an extension of the Magindanao world. As the ancient name of Sarangani Bay, *Sugod Boyan* or *Sugod Buayan* suggests, it was “the place toured or visited by the Sultan of Buayan.” The movement of some members of the Magindanao sultanate to the area reinforced the image of the southern part of Cotabato as an extension of

the Magindanao world. Ileta (1971) mentioned the use of Sarangani Bay as the entry and exit point for smuggled arms and slaves after the 1861 establishment of a Spanish garrison at the mouth of Pulangi in Cotabato town.

As an extension of the Magindanao world, *Sugod Buayan* or *Sugod Boyan* was a place for the Magindanaos to undertake the *domales* which means "to camp and to picnic" during which time supplementary activities like salt-making and fishing were done during the long months between the planting and harvesting of crops. Thus, make-shift huts were built along the coast occupied during the *domales* season. Others stayed with their kins in the area. Once finished with their camping and picknicking in *Sugod Buayan*, they returned to their permanent homes where their farms were usually located.

"We had good relationship then. The Muslim-Christian difference of today did not exist before. In fact, Sarip Zainal Abedin was the protector of the settlers," explained one settler. Even in the coastal settlement of Kiamba in the southern coast of Cotabato, the Christian migrants were said to be given advice by their Muslim friends on what to avoid in dealing with other Muslims to prevent conflict. "It was a relationship based on trust." These observations confirm the earlier study made by Lugum Uka (1952) and Nobutaka Suzuki (1992) that the early success of the Christian settlements in Cotabato could be attributed to the cooperation and protection accorded the settlers by powerful datos. There was Datu Piang in North Cotabato; Datu Kamsa in Northern Koronadal and Allah Valley; and Sarip Zainal Abedin in Southern Koronadal. For this paper let us focus our attention on Datu Sarip Zainal Abedin, the first mayor of Buayan, (now General Santos City).

According to reports, Datu Sarip Zainal Abedin is of Arab or Egyptian descent married to Aminah Muksin, a daughter of a very influential datu from lower Buayan. He led the Glan officials in welcoming General Paulino Santos and the settlers in February 1939. In 1940, when the Municipal District of Buayan was separated from its mother unit, the Municipal District of Glan, Datu Abedin became the first appointed mayor of Buayan. The Muksin-Abedin residence in lower Baluan fronting Sarangani Bay served then as the temporary seat of government of the Municipal District of Buayan (Ramirez 1994: 114).

In a conference with the Muslim leaders and their followers, General Santos in his diary narrated that he talked to the natives in the Maranao dialect, a dialect which he learned during his stay in Lanao when he was assigned as deputy governor of Lanao. In that conference, General Santos assured those present that whatever rights they have acquired or may acquire on their personal lands found within the settlement area would be respected by the NLSA administration. He enticed them with benefits that could be derived by the inhabitants of the valley with the establishment of the settlement in their midst like schools, health facilities, better roads and other infrastructure. General Santos even promised assistance in the acquisition of titles to their landholdings (Gen. Paulino Santos in a report published in 1947).

Moreover, as noted by Pelzer (1948) the government failed to make definite arrangements on the native inhabitants of Southern Philippines when Mindanao was opened for settlement. But as of 1939, the Magindanaos did not realize the full implication of the coming of the settlers. One daughter of a Muslim datu mentioned his father saying: "*kawawa naman sila*" (Tito 1997). That

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is why he gave them permission to get bamboos within his area of jurisdiction for house construction. Both groups opted for a peaceful co-existence then.

Despite the seemingly fruitful meeting, however, undercurrents of the historical divide manifested itself. For instance, one informant claimed that in that conference General Santos warned the group that should anything happen to anyone of the settlers, they (the natives) would answer personally to him. "One settler's life is equivalent to ten of yours," General Santos allegedly warned the group. Moreover, there is difficulty in verifying the truth of this allegation because none from among the migrant-settlers present could possibly understand the Maranao language used by General Santos, being first-timers in Mindanao. However, the persistence of accounts attributing these words to the general manager suggests a strong possibility of a pressure exerted to the indigenous inhabitants to "behave" or even leave the settlement area.

The rapid arrival of settlers beyond the expected number led to the opening of more settlement districts as fast as the arrival of the settlers. Fear of being dispossessed of their ancestral lands impelled more indigenous groups to settle to the surrounding areas to prevent the further expansion of the settlement areas (Tito, in an interview, 1997). There was also the economic opportunity provided by the presence of an increasing number of people. Hence, part of the reaction brought by the state-sponsored settlement was secondary migration from other groups coming from other parts of Mindanao lured to settle down in the immediate vicinity of Koronadal Valley.

Besides the Magindanaos, the other original inhabitants of Southern Koronadal were the B'laan. The B'laan tribe is one of the eighteen non-Muslim minority ethnic groups inhabiting the island of Mindanao. Traditionally, they inhabited South Cotabato, the southeastern part of Davao del Sur, the areas around Buluan Lake, and Sarangani Island off the coast of Mindanao. According to Arcenas (1993), *bila* means friend in the Magindanao dialect since the B'laans were viewed as a friendly people.

The B'laans reacted to the Christian presence by retreating to the mountains. Arcenas (1993) explained this peaceful reaction to their value system which placed primacy on peace and harmony. As explained by Arcenas:

"In another folklore, the ethnic minorities in Mindanao are believed to have descended from two brothers Mamalu and Tambunaway [Tabunaway]. . . A so-called peace pact or *d'yandi* was enacted between the brothers towards preserving peace and ensuring harmonious co-existence among their descendants. B'laan elders pointed out that in the course of history, there have been no major conflicts between the tribes except for minor personal incidents. No single piece of historical account, either written or oral, ever called attention to the fact that the Maguindanaos attempted to invade the B'laans or the Manobos or vice versa"(Arcenas 1993: 35-38).

Thus, it could be seen that the choice of Koronadal Valley as the settlement site worked favorably because the original inhabitants - the Magindanaos and the B'laans - lived in a peaceful environment and historically predisposed towards peace and harmony. In other words, while favorable location was identified as

the first ingredient which defined the success of the Koronadal settlement, the second ingredient was attributed to the peaceful predisposition of the people they (the settlers) met in the area when they came.



Fig. 6. A B'laan chief and his followers on their way to a hunt. Lagao, Southern Koronadal or Buayan (now General Santos City (Fig. 80 of Pelzer 1945).

The coming of the Christian settlers forced the B'laans to redefine their identities and to adapt to new demands and exaction to their traditional way of life. When settlers came to claim and clear the virgin lands of the B'laans, change was inevitable. With the settlers came new ways, new dialects, and new forms of living. Subsequent events showed that some unscrupulous newcomers would exploit these peaceful people, their traditional way of life affected by the settlement to such an extent that one writer dubbed them "the vanishing nomads."

The B'laans viewed the coming of the settlers as threatening to their way of life because they didn't understand what was happening. A B'laan native explains:

"When the Christians arrived in the place it was peaceful, but we were afraid of them. Even the footprints or the cigarette butts that we saw instilled fear on us. We hid ourselves because we did not know the language of the Christians" (Datu Ugan Samling, in an interview, 1995).

Another native of Sitio Salkan in Barangay Paraiso of Koronadal, in a study made by Roselyn C. Ferfas (1996), described his experience with the coming of the settlers:

"The Christians that we have seen first in the place were ex-governor Sergio Morales and a certain Berto Lucero and Augustin Millan. We did not understand their language so we hid

ourselves. We were afraid to (sic) them because at that time we believed that the Christians will kill us.” (Bernardo Gulaya, in an interview by Ferfas, 1995)

Faced with the coming of the settlers and seeing their vast hunting ground occupied by the newcomers, they quietly withdrew and settled in the “distant mountains”. While one B'laan claimed they were told to leave, Datu Ugan Samling of Barrio Kalkam in Tupi in Middle Koronadal claimed that nobody told them to leave. They simply left because “maraming settlers” (there were many settlers). But he did acknowledge that there was a rich Christian who once threatened to shoot him.

The natives of Koronadal Valley who felt culturally inferior lived at the outskirts of the settlement. Moreover, despite clearly defined boundaries with the settlers residing within the settlement area and the original inhabitants mostly found at the outskirts of the settlement, interaction was bound to occur. They “served as milk mothers, field and house hands, and hunting companions to the early settlers so that these regarded them as indispensable,” reported by Virginia Buhisan (1980). Buhisan further informed us that the natives later learned to adopt some new skills such as fishing, wet land rice farming, and more sophisticated household tools that they learned from their Christian neighbors. The settlers in turn benefited from the natives’ simple technology with the acquired knowledge in folk medicine, methods of root crop planting, the making of animal traps, and tapping natural springs for drinking water. The market place was the place for the most interactions where native merchandize like ginger, rattan, bamboo, and root crops were brought and much sought after by the Christian housewives. These were exchanged for clothing, sardines, and other items.

2. The Newcomers to the Valley

The story of Datu Kusay indicates that starting the twenties, Cotabato “wilderness” was probed open by adventurous individuals who saw an opportunity in the land of the Magindanaos. Two of them played important roles in the pre-1939 migration to Buayan.

The first were the Olarte hermanos, the brothers Don Jose “Pepe” and Don Alberto Olarte. Natives of Orjales, Santander, Spain they came to the Philippines in 1908, first in Manila, then Davao, finally in Makar in Buayan. People like them who had money found out that new land laws passed during the American period made it possible for them to buy a thousand of hectares of land. The Olarte Hermanos were reported to engage in cattle raising, pineapple and abaca planting in Makar. A proof of the vast tract of land they owned was the donation of 94 hectares called the Makar Townsite, which was attested by the American governor-general Stimson in 1928. An important personality of his time in Koronadal, Don Pepe was mentioned to be instrumental together with Datu Piang in arranging the surrender of the Sultan of Koronadal to the American authorities in 1918. Through the twenties, the ranch and plantation of the Olarte Hermanos attracted the *sakadas* from Negros, Cebu, and Bohol. One of them was a former teacher, Pedro Acharon, who will later become a leading political figure in the post-war Municipality of Buayan (Don Alberto Olarte, in an interview conducted by Dr. Domingo Non, 1987).

Whatever happened to them in the thirties is not clear. But today's land claim filed by the so-called "Olarite heirs" for an area in Makar, Cotabato where their landholdings existed before indicate that somehow they lost control of their land due for some reason.

Another important figure, Don Francisco "Paco" Natividad, was the most prominent figure in Koronadal Valley when the 1939 settlers came. In 1932, Don Paco hosted the then Director of the Bureau of Prison, Director Paulino Santos who came to Buayan to search for a suitable site for a planned penal colony in Mindanao. The redoubtable Don Paco was said to have decided on the great promise of Koronadal Valley after making a tour of Mindanao aboard a chartered boat of Compania Maritima with some businessmen from Luzon. When he decided to resettle in the valley, he brought with him 35 families from Nueva Ecija, modern farm machineries, and 70 carabaos (Ramirez 1994). Through the years, Don Paco did not tire in preaching on the great potential of Koronadal Valley. General Paulino Santos could have been one of the converts. His warm welcome to the government-sponsored settlers was instrumental in confirming the latter's decision to come to the valley. He gave them confidence in their decision by showing the gains he already had and the productive harvests he produced. Paving the way and helping those who came later could truly call him, together with the Olarte hermanos, the title, the *pioneers*.

Besides Don Paco, just as important was the businessman Mr. Suikichi Kuruda, the owner of the only store found in Dadiangas when the settlers came. Kuruda came to Davao in late 1910 where he was employed at the Ohta Development Company. While still an employee of the Ohta Development Company he married a beautiful B'laan woman named Manuela Jandoc in Davao. A couple of weeks after marriage, they transferred to Dadiangas where Kuruda opened the first grocery store. As the owner of the only store in Dadiangas, he provided a means of economic exchange of goods in the valley. A daughter of one settler narrates her experience:

"When I was 13 years old, I used to go with Father every time he went somewhere. When we were already harvesting our produce I also went with him when he delivered them to Mr. Kuruda in Dadyangas. He is a Japanese and he has so many stores. But we deliver our products to a store located near the present Rey Store[near the old docking area of ships now known as the Magsaysay Park]. Now I am always amused when I reminisce those days when I was fond of asking money to buy bread and clothes" (Elena Mari, in an interview by Herlin Cosep, 1995).

Kuruda was not the only Japanese national in the valley. Gingero Takahashi, a one time resident of Tupi was a companion and friend of Kuruda going back to their days at the Ohta Development Company. Takahashi went with the Kuruda couple to Dadiangas but decided to settle down in Tupi after his marriage to a B'laan woman named Guinda Bagui with whom he had 5 children. When his wife died, he married another unknown B'laan woman and produced another 5

children. The childless Kuruda couple adopted one of his daughters, Catalina. When war broke out, he and Kuruda served the Japanese army.

While proven to be fiercely loyal to Japan, nevertheless, the two (Kuruda and Takahashi) were said to have saved many Christian lives during the Japanese occupation of the valley. While considered "enemies", nonetheless, they proved true sons of the valley. The presence of the two Japanese emphasized the image of Koronadal Valley as a *melting pot* of the country.

The *melting pot* image was further reinforced by a provision of Commonwealth Act No. 441 which provided that applicants for settlement purposes shall be recruited "from all provinces in proportion to their respective population and in case a province shall not be able to fill the quota assigned, the unfilled portion of the quota may be covered from other provinces having greater number of applicants." Clearly, this highly political provision emanated from the legislators themselves who demanded that their respective provinces share the benefit that may be derived from the land settlement law. This is seen by personal efforts made by some congressmen in facilitating the settlement of their constituents under the program like the account on a personal recruitment made by Governor Bernardo Torres of Leyte of 14 Leyteño families who migrated to Koronadal Valley on July 19, 1940 (Acapulco 1995). Thus, Commonwealth Act No. 441 made possible the representation of various ethnic groups of the country in the Koronadal-Allah Valley settlement areas inaugurating the second and most extensive process of realizing the so called "population complexity" of Cotabato earlier reported during the period of the sultanates.

Thus, Buayan in particular, and Cotabato in general, became a melting pot of the country in spirit and in reality. The list of home origin of Koronadal settlers as of 1941 (See Appendix C) shows a relative representation of settlers from 41 of the 50 provinces of the country. As expected, the greatest number of pre-war settlers came from the Visayas region like Iloilo, Leyte, Cebu, and Capiz. Settlers from Luzon (Pampanga, Pangasinan, and Tarlac) represented less than one third of the total number of settlers. Even migrants who have already settled in various areas of Mindanao like Cotabato town, Davao, Misamis, and Zamboanga undertook a secondary migration to Koronadal Valley with its promise of land ownership and government assistance. Increasingly, more and more people came at their own expense and applied as settlers upon arrival in Koronadal. Most of the settlers who came later were relatives of the earlier settlers.

These different groups of people who were brought together in one geographical zone by the government's project had to define their relationship. They opted for a peaceful co-existence and, with the favored option, learned how to live together in peace with people of different cultural orientations.

Moreover, the clear identification of the settlement area precludes real mixing together of the original inhabitants and the newcomers. The newcomers established themselves within the settlement areas while the original inhabitants were found at the outskirts of the settlement. Perhaps, this exclusivity was necessary for security purposes so as to lessen chances of tension between the two divergent groups.

B. Koronadal Valley Settlement: A Defended Community

The Koronadal Valley project was not provided with army escorts or a regular police force. General Paulino Santos, although a military man and with a reputation for being brave, could not have maintained order if the original inhabitants reacted with hostility to their coming. Thus, steps were taken to ensure the security of the newcomers. The general manager moved to get an assurance of cooperation from the natives by calling them in a conference through the municipal officials of Glan, Cotabato who visited them the afternoon of February 27 (Santos 1947).

In the conference the next day, General Santos' diary narrated the events of that day:

"I talked to the headmen and residents in a very informal manner, speaking in the Maranao dialect which they understood very well. I explained to them that whatever rights they have acquired or may acquire on their present lands will be duly respected by the administration, and to emphasize this fact, I made it clear that the best title one can have for possession over a piece of land is the existence of improvements thereon, such as houses, plants, fences, etc. The people were very glad to hear this and expressed their gratitude over this attitude of the Administration.

I told them I would always be glad to assist them in acquiring titles for their landholdings. Appealed to their sense of cooperation and helpfulness and advised them to avail themselves of the services of local officials, such as the governor or land officer, and if necessary, to communicate with me should there arise some question which cannot be settled between them and the settlement supervisor."

Thereafter, every time General Santos met the native inhabitants he continuously made similar assurances of good intention. His account of the tour of the valley in the early days of the settlement with the settlers made this clear:

"Left Dadiangas with all members of my party at 6:15 a.m., first for Polomolok. I brought one half of the settlers on the truck to have a look at the beautiful valley of Koronadal. Reached Polomolok at 8:00 a.m. and we were entertained by Mr. & Mrs. Francisco Natividad with sumptuous breakfast. The settlers were amazed of the plants on the farm and each of them brought one citrus fruit to show those left behind. Left for Marbel at 9:00 a.m. arriving there at 10:30 a.m. We were met here by Major Goodall and some of the settlers, and many of the Moros residing in the vicinity. I talked again with the residents about our project and assured them that their rights will be respected . . . We had a great difficulty in passing over the trail because the

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workers did not remove well the stumps and earthmounds along the trail. Got sore on the way the trail was made. We had to walk more than a kilometer to Lutayan . . .”

Besides getting an assurance of cooperation from the original inhabitants of the valley, the general manager ordered the installation of a transmitting and receiving radio station in order to establish a direct link with Manila. Messages were then sent to Secretary Rafael H. Alunan, chairman of the NLSA Board of Directors; to General Basilio J. Valdes, Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army; General Guillermo V. Francisco, chief of constabulary; and other officials who helped in the realization of the project.

On March 3, the first settlement site was established in Lagao a short distance away from Dadiangas. Its proximity to Dadiangas, a quiet, secure, and anchorage area, became the major consideration for the choice of Lagao as the first settlement area and as the nerve center of the Koronadal project with its selection as the administration center in Mindanao. Other considerations include its being the terminal point of the proposed national highway (Alunan Highway) between Sarangani Bay and Dulawan; its being a non-malarial area; and finally, its being the least inhabited area of Koronadal Valley (Pelzer 1945: 150).

Lagao had a land area of 30,200 hectares of which 10,000 were for distribution to the settlers. Moreover, the distribution of farm lots had to wait until the survey. The failure of the NLSA to follow the recommendations made by the reconnaissance team for a thorough survey of the water supply available for irrigation and the water holding capacity of the light, sandy soil of Southern Koronadal led to the early difficulties of the settlers. The settlers' failure to undertake agricultural activities the soonest time possible also caused additional but unnecessary burden to the NLSA since under the contract, NLSA was obligated to provide for the settlers' needs while they had no production yet.

It should be recalled that the reason given for the haste in the implementation of the program despite the absence of the law creating the NLSA was the need to start the planting before the onset of the summer months. Indeed, planting was made on their home lots and in the administration farm but it turned yellowish and died. "If I had wings, I could have flown back to Aklan", one settler recalled his disappointment then. He planned to back out from the program. After all, he was not actually landless in Aklan. Besides, he had not seen the kind of soil in Koronadal in any place in Panay and was wondering whether they could grow crops in Koronadal. But despite his decision to abandon the settlement area, he was not able to do so because no ships came (Isaias Rogan, in an interview, 1994). Unknown to them, General Santos had asked the shipping lines to reroute their scheduled trips and not to dock at Dadiangas port temporarily (Ramirez 1994).

The months of July and August were crucial ones. The morale of the settlers was at its lowest point. Some settlers were planning to back out. Increasingly, vocal criticisms against the program were getting louder. Some senators were even known to campaign for the abrogation of Commonwealth Act No. 441. Newspapers and radios talked about the apathetic attitude of some members of the Board of Directors of the NLSA.

Something had to be done. It was clear that to stem the tide of rising criticisms, a solution to the problem of lack of rain had to be solved. But before doing that, it was necessary to lift the sagging morale of the settlers first. So, a meeting was immediately called where General Santos was reported to have told the settlers:

“Be proud of yourself! We are here to stay for good. Let us be patient. We shall soon overcome all these obstacles. Yes, with our firm determination and with God’s blessing” (Ramirez 1993: 52).

Words alone were not enough. General Santos knew that something had to be done. They decided to tap Klaja River found 9 kilometers north of Lagao for the irrigation. Instinctively, everyone understood that the future of the project lay in licking this particular crisis faced by the fledgling settlement. The NLSA employees left their offices and joined the settlers in constructing the irrigation. The irrigation system, started on July 3, was finally finished on August 9 with a discharge of 130 liters per second (Ramirez 1993: 52).

It was not only the leadership of the Koronadal project that was bent on making the settlement project survive the crisis. No less than President Quezon himself came over for a visit on June 28, 1939. In a meeting with the settlers, President Quezon gave a morale-boosting speech:

“Kayong mga settlers na dinala ni Paulino Santos dito sa timog ng Cotabato, huwag kayong mawalan ng pag-asa. Tulungan ninyo si Heneral Santos sa kanyang pangarap na kayo ay magkaroon ng sariling lupa. Mahalin ninyo at darating ang araw maibibigay ko ang inyong titulo upang maging sarili ninyo. Ipagpatuloy ang naumpisahan ! May awa ang Diyos. Tayong lahat ay magtatagumpay sa ating mithiin.”

(You, the settlers brought by Paulino Santos to South Cotabato, do not lose hope. Help General Santos realize his dream for you to have a land of your own. Love it and the time will come when I will be able to give the title to your lands. Continue with what was started! With God’s help, we will overcome.)

This presidential visit at the crucial juncture of the project underscores the president’s personal concern for the success of the project that he started even without the authorization of a law. Its success or failure was as much a political issue as far as the president was concerned. Thus, full presidential support was given to the project which neutralized the reported unsupportive stance of some members of the Board of Directors some of whom started to call Koronadal Valley: *“ang mga bayan ng alikabok”* Where any delay in fund releases may jeopardize the operation of the settlement, General Santos made an appeal directly to the President for personal intervention to speed up bureaucratic tape.

Besides the lack of rain, there was also the delay in the distribution of farm lots causing an unnecessary financial burden to the NLSA since everything

had to be provided for including food while the settlers had no production yet. These were charged to the settlers' accounts with married settlers entitled to one thousand pesos and six hundred pesos to the single ones. This is shown by the financial report prepared by the NLSA comptrollers as of December 31, 1940. Table 1 below shows that the NLSA had an income of 89,531.06 pesos from interest charges, electric light feed, charges for transportation and preparation of the settlers' farm lots, sales of seed and seedlings, and various other sources of income. Moreover, the report also shows that 45.83 percent of the budget went to the settlers in the form of advances.



Fig. 7. Drawing of first farm lots in Lagao, Southern Koronadal (Fig. 91 of Pelzer, 1945).

In the meantime, an administration farm was established where settlers were hired as laborers receiving 50 centavos a day. The administration farms served as an experiment and demonstration stations, particularly its seed and livestock farms. These were established to determine the viability of producing alternative cash crops, a major objective of the settlement project. A promising start was made with a thousand-hectare rubber farm in Tupi before the war. Plans were likewise in place for a mechanized cultivation of cotton in Lagao when war broke out (Pelzer 1948).

The main function of the seed farm was the production of seeds needed in large quantities by the settlers. The settlement was particularly successful with the livestock farm. The largest hog farm then in the Philippines was found near Lagao. This hog farm started with 18 sows and 2 boars bought for 1,177 pesos. The objective of the livestock farm was to provide the settlers with a pair of good breeding pigs and later to produce pigs for the market. After two years of operation, the original 18 sows and 2 boars became 600 pigs of all sizes excluding those that had been sold to the settlers (Pelzer 1948: 151-153). Indeed, the foundation for a self-supporting and productive settlement area was in place when war broke out.

Lack of settlers was never a problem. On the contrary, their rapid arrival in the valley necessitated fast tracking of the expansion of settlement areas.

This placed a tremendous pressure on the budget needs of the project. For instance, while the budget allowed for the recruitment of only 600 for every settlement per year, the number who came was double the required number. The NLSA management in Koronadal tried its best to cope with the growing demands. Thus, bunkhouses, as temporary lodging places of new arrivals while they were not able to build their houses yet, were constructed as fast as possible. When there was an immediate need to expand due to the number of settlers in comparison to the land available for settlement, sometimes applicants had to open the roads themselves. Due to the enthusiastic response to the land settlement program, earlier in May, the NLSA Board of Directors decided to reduce the land allotted to any settler whose farm was located along the national highway.



Fig. 8. The NLSA Hog Farm Before the War
(From Pelzer, 1945)

Table 1
NLSA EXPENSES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1940

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>%</u>
ADVANCE TO SETTLERS	P794, 565.92	45.03
COST OF OPERATING	534, 028.17	30.26
Administrative Projects (Piggery, Poultry Farm machinery, Transportation, office furniture, equipment, hospital and dispensary instruments)		
WAGES, TRAVELING EXPENSE, Freight and handling charges, Rentals of buildings and offices, Postal service, etc.	233,079.90	13.21
SALARIES	202,819.87	11.49
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TOTAL	P1,764,449.76	100%
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By this time, the procedure for the acceptance of an applicant as a settler was institutionalized as explained by Ramirez (1993):

“Upon their arrival, they were examined by the medical staff led by Dr. Jorge Royeca and Dr. Sergio Morales. They were inoculated against cholera and dysentery. Thereafter, they were housed in plain long sheds of bunkhouses located in Lagao district (Barrio Balite). These bunkhouses were divided into small sections, each accommodating one family. A few days after they were assigned to one of the settlement districts to which trucks transported them.

In each settlement district, an officer in charge (overseer) explained in public meeting the duties of new settlers and assigned to each a homelot, usually 2,000 square meters in size. The first task of a new settler was to build a house for his family. Usually, the NLSA supplied the materials necessary for a simple house of bamboos and roofed with cogon grass or the leaves of nipa palm. The next step was the assignment of farm lots. . . “

Reverend Domingo who was then assigned to Marbel district gives a more vivid account:

“Dito kami natulog sa Dadiyangas at kinabukasan may malakas na ugong at ito pala ang pangdating ng marami at malalaking trak na naghakot sa amin. Halos isang araw ang pagdala sa amin at sa awa ng Panginoon ay dito kami sa Marbel . . . Hinakot kami at dinala kami doon sa tabi ng San Felipe. Dito po ay may mahabang bankhouse na may mga kuarto na may numero at nagbonotan kaming lahat dahil kami ay naging 86 head pamilya kaming nalagay dito sa tinatawag nila barrio ono. Ang mga kasama namin sa barko napunta sila sa mga ibang barrio sa 5, 2, 3, 8 ito dito sila nadistino. . . Dito naman kami umiyak dahil sa ang palibot namin ay cogonal, talahiban, kakahoyan at ang dami ngang baboy damo at usa lalo itong (wild carabaos). Ang naririnig namin ay huni ng unggoy, ibon at mga kulintang ng Muslim”.

Ang buhay namin bilang settler ay laging may schedule ng aming pagkuha o pagbali namin sa aming pangangailangan. Kada barrio dala mo ang carabao at karosa at lahat na kailanganin sa isang simana isulat sa isang papel na maliit. At kada simana may miting.”

“Upon arrival, we slept in Dadiangas. By the next day the noise signaled the arrival of the trucks which would bring us to our destination. This took about one day. With the grace of God, we were brought to Marbel where we were brought near San

Felipe. There was a long bunkhouse divided into small sections intended to each family. There were 86 heads of families who participated in the lottery to determine who will be sent to Barrio 1. We were distributed to the different barrios: 5, 2, 3, 8. . . We felt anxiety looking at the surroundings with its cogonal, talahiban, kakahoyan and the wild pigs, deer, and wild carabaos. We heard the sound of the squeeking monkeys, the birds, and the kulintang of the Muslims.

Our life as settlers was routinary. There was a schedule for everything including the distribution of ration. Once a week, we wrote down on a small sheet of paper our weekly needs , then brought our carabao and cart where we placed our supplies. We also had a meeting once a week”)

When the national highway reached Marbel by the end of 1939, Lt. Jesus Larrabaster was directed by the manager to open Marbel district on January 10, 1940. With a general rainfall classification of “rainfall more or less evenly distributed throughout the year”, Marbel district was the most attractive settlement site especially due to the “Ilonggos” preference for a *basakan*” Earlier in July, the Tupi settlement was established. Polomolok would be established much later due to the lack of potable water aside from it being a malarial area. Of the four settlement districts, Marbel had the fastest growth of population as shown by Table 2.

Each of the settlement districts had one town which served as the administrative and economic center around which the barrios were located. Each district was placed under an overseer and a staff of assistants. The office of the overseer, the store, hospital, church, school, warehouse, tool and machinery sheds, and other buildings were found in the town. Each barrio was under the charge of a barrio lieutenant and an assistant barrio lieutenant, both of which were chosen by the settlers from among themselves. The town of this period inevitably became the nucleus of the post-war municipalities with the exception of Lagao whose pre-war preeminence was overshadowed by the nearby Dadiangas found outside the settlement area.

Table 2
Population Growth in Koronadal, 1941 & 1948

<u>Settlement District</u>	1941*	1948**
Lagao	582	4,434
Tupi	582	7,906
Polomolok	347	-
Marbel	916	11,152

* Unpublished NLSA record as quoted from Pelzer, *op. cit.*

** Census of 1948.

While the manager chose the overseer, the barrio lieutenant and the assistant barrio lieutenant were chosen by the people themselves in a meeting called for the purpose. This democratic practice together with the weekly meeting helped in the creation of the feeling of **community**. It was in the weekly meetings that problems were thrashed out especially in matters of relationship with each other. For instance, Reverend Domingo tells of the “rambol” by the Ilongo and Ilocano youngsters. This was immediately followed by a conference of the battling youths with their parents. The conference usually ended with an admonition by the barrio lieutenant or the overseer, as the case may be, of the need for building a smooth interaction with one another and with other people outside the district as well.

The conscious effort of building a community of people in harmony with each other was shown by the activities promoted by the management. Thus, a regular “baile”, a community public dance was a favored activity of the young and the young at heart. The bachelors engaged in the favorite pastime of *harana*. In the early months of the settlement a bowling alley was built for the recreation of the settlers in the Lagao district. Birthdays, wakes for the dead, weddings, and even the *pasiyam*, the nine days of prayer for the dead which followed the burial, were well-attended. Sometimes, ballgames like softball were played by the different groups coming from various settlement areas competing with each other.

Cultural differences caused conflict. But the imperatives of solidarity was emphasized time and again where the ugly specter of ethnic differences threatened to rise up as seen in the account of Reverend Domingo on the gang wars of the Ilocano and Ilongo youngsters in Marbel. Eventually, adjustments were made on the new environment. But while the predominant culture became the norm, acculturation was a two-way process. For instance, the cultural experience of the Christian settlers in Kiamba did not prepare them for the wild pigs, deer, monkeys, and birds. To save their plants they learned the art of trapping wild animals from the indigenous inhabitants. They also learned a lot from observation of the ways of life of the indigenous inhabitants. Thus, Virginia Buhisan (1980) reports:

“Christian neighbors are welcome to T’boli celebrations like weddings and wakes for the dead, and they attend as friends and to observe how the T’boli carry out these ceremonies. Sometimes they are invited as “honored guests.”

While there are no accounts that similar relationship occurred between the B’laans and the Christian settlers of Koronadal, however, the imperatives of community solidarity appeared to have tempered whatever biases the more modern Christian settlers had against the original inhabitants. Let us take the case of one Ilocano settler whose perception of the other ethnic groups when he arrived was symptomatic of the cultural baggage that he was bringing with him. Thus, he observed:

“Dito rin bumalik ang longkot dahil panay Hilongo ang salita ng dinatnan namin. Araw ng palengke noon araw ng Sabado dito ako nakakita ng mga Bilaan at Moro sa palengke.

Ang mga Bilaan ay parang babai sila mahaba ang bohok nila at maliliit sila. Ang Moslem din ay ang pag-tingin ko sa kanila ay kriminal dahil hindi nila mabitawan ang tabas nila at ang bangkaw, kaya't takot na takot ako sa kanila dahil ang mga baro nila ay abaca fiber. Tahimik akong nanonood lalo naman ang mga Hilongo kong magsalita parang ibon."

("Loneliness returned upon hearing the strange Ilonggo language of the people when we arrived. It was on a market day when I first saw the B'laan and the Moro. The B'laans were like women because they had long hair. I feared the Muslims because they appeared fearsome due to the bolos and spears always at their side. Their dresses were made of abaca fiber. I silently observed them especially the Ilonggos who talked like birds.")

Eventually, however, this settler in question learned that the fearsome Moros could also be friends. He learned their language and recalled with pride the advantage he had over other settlers because he knew how to talk the Magindanao language. Indeed, understanding comes with knowledge and breaking the language barrier was the first step towards understanding other people.

It was expected that the language of the numerical majority would be used as the lingua franca of the community. Thus, Tagalog was used in Lagao where the settlers were recruited in Manila. On the other hand, Hiligaynon was and, still is, the prevailing language in Marbel. But through the course of time, the Bisayans greatly outnumbered the Tagalogs in Southern Koronadal. Eventually, the language which evolved in Southern Koronadal was the Tagalog-Bisayan variant.

Some of the processes involved in the process of interaction between and among the interacting groups in the Koronadal Valley migration experience is attempted at this point.

"Melting pot" means the mixing together of different cultural groups in one geographical zone. The word "melting pot" as used in Chapter IV refers to the convergence of people in Koronadal Valley coming from 41 provinces of the country as of 1941. Moreover, the term as used by Pelzer (1948) referred only to the Christian migrant - settlers. A more realistic meaning of the "melting pot" concept could be derived if one is to take into account the meeting together in General Santos community of the three distinct autonomous but interdependent groups in interaction with each other, namely: the Christians, the Muslims, and the B'laans.

During the settlement days, the social process of *accommodation* was the framework for interaction established from the time of initial contact. Aided by the congruence of the newcomers' intention of building for themselves a better future and the original inhabitants' desire to continue their peaceful existence coupled with the enticement of benefits which could be derived from the presence of infrastructure and economic opportunities brought by the settlement, such peaceful accommodation, referred to as the "mantle of protection" in Chapter IV, established the framework of contact between the newcomers to the valley and the original inhabitants. As the "conscious efforts

of men to develop such working arrangements among themselves as will suspend conflict and make their relations tolerable," *accommodation* was a favored option. During this period when the three autonomous groups were segregated from each other by settlement boundaries, it was in the area of economic exchange, in the market places, where they met on common footing that frequent interaction took place.

Acculturation is the natural result of "societies of different cultures in a fairly close and long-continued contact with each other." *Acculturation* does not imply the loss of an older culture but merely the acquisition of some new traits from another culture. The dominant position assumed by the newcomers after the war due to numerical superiority gave the new traits favorable status coupled with the comforts derived from the adoption of the Christians' material culture. Although there was the clinging to ancestral customs especially by the old folks, the manner of acquisition of new cultural traits was not forced but based on a perception of pragmatic need making this social process a natural result of the long and continued contact with each other.

The establishment of local governmental units opened the previous settlement areas to more people. Despite differences, people in interaction with one another cannot long remain oblivious of each other. Cases of intermarriages or *amalgamation* were and are taking place. Who gets to follow what religion as a result of amalgamation depends on the individuals involved in the *amalgamation* process. More importantly, amalgamation as a social process is also the fastest way in bringing about adoption of cultural traits in a social process popularly known as *acculturation*, the process of modifying one's culture as a result of cultural borrowings.



Fig. 9. The young folks dancing the curacha during the NLSA Days (File Photo owned by the Estabillo Family)

Acculturation also implies mutual borrowing. Thus, Reverend Domingo learned the Magindanao language to enable him to communicate with the Magindanaos passing at his residence on their way to the market place. The Glan and Kiamba migrant-settlers, on the other hand, learned survival techniques in trapping deers, birds, boars, snakes, and other wild animals; the technique of getting water from a branch of a tree, and the like. Likewise, the newcomers' adoption of indigenous materials more suited to the area indicated mutual borrowing and adaptation to the new environment.

On the other hand, the material culture brought by the settlers appeared beneficial and therefore appealing to the indigenous inhabitants. Such material culture like household utensils, additional agricultural crops, the use of soap, canned goods, the Christian manner of dressing, etc. were the most common form of cultural borrowings. Among the institutions, which facilitated both socialization and acculturation, were the school, church, market, and government.

The school was the first of the social institutions where regular contacts among children of interacting cultures were taking place. With the rapid increase of population after the war, more schools were built. Communities started most of these schools with little or no government assistance at all. In school, children learned to adjust to each other's cultural peculiarities and learned each other's language. Some even became the best of friends.

The strong community solidarity of the pre-war days manifested itself in education. A 1952 report mentioned "all public school buildings, with the exception of the WDC building at Lagao, were built by the active Parent-Teachers Association with very little help from the municipal and provincial government" (Siat in Millan 1952:73). A migrant-settler of Tampacan in Tupi recalled how they established their complete elementary school:

"Mrs. Alejandrino tried her best to have elementary school here . . . a complete elementary school. But . . . the supervisor of Marbel, I am not sure if he was Mr. Sindao, he gave a challenge to us; to the three barrios namely: the barrio Maltana, Tampakan, and Bo. 7. "If whoever can build a semi standard classroom for the elementary will be given a complete elementary school," the supervisor said.

We really tried our best to meet this challenge. We agreed to construct a complete elementary school with seven classrooms; one for the principal, another room for the clinic and one for the home economics. And so we made it. The floorings were all sawed roundwood. Luckily, during the inspection, the Tampakan school buildings were declared to have met the standard requirement. Bo. 7 and Maltana also built their own school buildings but these were ground flooring. So, we officially opened the first complete elementary school" (Carlos Godmaling, in an interview by Acapulco, 1995).

The church was also an important agent of acculturation. While no active proselytizing activity occurred between the Muslim and Christian groups, both the Protestant missionary groups and the Roman Catholic Church

undertook aggressive evangelization efforts among the Lumads. Religious conversions brought about major cultural changes as described by a daughter of a T'boli-B'laan:

“The more a person is grounded in his Christian teachings, such incompatible practices like smoking of tobacco, pagan rites like Imoss (pronounced almoos), duwaya system (the practice of having two or more wives), and ritual healing were abandoned.”

The marketplace was also an important agent of acculturation as the place of a major interaction of people. Meeting on a common footing, the exchange of goods took place in market places. A significant contribution by the newcomers to the area was the transformation of the previous barter economy into a cash economy.

Finally, the establishment of barangays and sitios brought the government to remote areas. Native chieftains' influence, however, remained strong in rural areas where cultural homogeneity of one ethnic group remained. In these areas, formal leaders represented by elected government officials considered it more prudent to consult the traditional leaders on issues affecting them.

The ideal situation when different ethnic groups met in a social setting would have been cultural pluralism since in cultural pluralism, the two or more distinct cultural groups “maintain their equal rights within the nation.” The earlier process of accommodation was naturally leading towards the direction of cultural pluralism.

C. Social Structure and Social Network of Relationship

Social structure is a universal feature of culture. It consists of an “organized set of social identities and the expected behavior associated with them.” In a given society, discovering the social structure is the key in understanding that society. In a study of this kind, informants are often asked the social identity of specific individuals mentioned in their accounts. Out of these information obtained from oral history, one can then examine the categorization of people. This study came up with three, namely: the settlers, the original inhabitants, and the NLSA employees. Besides the settlers and the original inhabitants that were discussed earlier, the role of the NLSA employees is worth mentioning because of the part they played in the settlement area.

The NLSA employees were a special kind of people in the settlement area. The NLSA, as a government corporation is mandated to give “opportunity to tenant farmers and small farmers from congested areas to own farms, and to extend this opportunity to trainees”. As the group in-charge of carrying out the program, the people who constituted the organization assumed special importance in the eyes of the settler. This attitude could best be understood if we consider the obligations of the NLSA as embodied in the contract signed by the settler with the NLSA: (1) to advance the cost of transportation; (2) to assign him a parcel of 12 hectares of land; (3) to supply him on credit basis expenses for building materials, foods, use of machinery such as tractors and plows, planting materials, fertilizer, livestock and other agricultural implements;

(4) to sell in the settler's behalf products deposited by him in the NLSA warehouse; and (5) to give him full title to the land after all the obligations should have been met.

The mandated obligations of the NLSA toward the settlers provided both a strong sense of security and dependency on the part of the settlers in its relationship with the government as represented by the NLSA. The assurance that the government, through the NLSA, would take care of their needs provided a strong sense of security and dependency. Thus, the strong "father image" of General Paulino Santos, which neutralized what outsiders, called the "semi-military" ways in the settlement. From Teodulo Ramirez (1993) we get a profile of General Paulino Santos, dubbed the founder and father of the community in his work entitled *The Southerner*.

General Paulino Santos was a native of Camiling, Tarlac of Ilocano parentage. Born on June 22, 1890, he entered a private school at age seven. Moreover, due to the interruptions caused by the Philippine Revolution, it was not until 1906 that the young Paulino obtained his seventh grade certificate.

The seventh grade certificate was deemed sufficient during this time for one to become a teacher that was what happened with Paulino. But the young man had his eyes beyond the shore through the United States Navy. So, he quit teaching and went to Manila. But he came at a wrong time. The outbreak of cholera in Manila led to the suspension of the enlistment of Filipinos for the United States Navy. However, the young man was not ready to give up on a dream and return back to the province. In the meantime, during the waiting period and in order to sustain himself while in Manila, he worked as a washer of softdrink bottles in a factory in Tondo receiving a monthly wage of P7.00, working 14 hours daily.

When he reached age eighteen he was able to enlist himself in the first General Services Company, United States Army starting as a private and rose to the ranks. In the examination for the Military Academy, he displayed exceptional ability and graduated at the head of his class composed of Filipinos and Americans. After graduation from the Military Academy, he was commissioned in 1914.

His first assignment as a junior officer was in Malolos, Bulacan. After a few months, he was assigned to Mati, Davao in Mindanao. It was in Mati where he experienced a fist fight with an American officer where he ended up unconscious. Explaining that incident he mentioned that: "no man is entitled to insult the uniform of an army officer who would suffer humiliation from any man". Such incident shows the stuff of which the young Paulino was made of. From his own account Paulino narrated that incident when he was still an orderly of General Harbord:

"while I was a personal orderly to General Harbord at the time, he was traveling to Mindanao with Secretary Dickinson, the aide-de camp to General Harbord had the imprudence to order me to clean his buttons. I resented the idea, because I was already aspiring to become an officer, so I suggested that I would take them to his cabin boy for the latter to clean. He brought the matter to the General and complained of disobedience on my part. I was sent for by General Harbord, who by the way also

rose from the ranks. Instead, however, of listening to the complaints of his aide, I was congratulated for having the courage to fight for my rights and he ordered the offending officer to apologize for the blunder he committed. I drew attention to this, because so few of our men would look at it in that light. In most cases it would have been construed as an act of insubordination."

Both incidents show a keen awareness by the young Paulino of the principle of justice and equality. There were also reports of the young officer living up to the standard required of an officer to the point of: "I had to spend half of my pay and allowance to live up to the standards required of an officer."

It was in Lanao that the young officer's courage and daring manifested itself. On March 1917, 2nd Lt. Santos was named station commander relieving Captain F.A. Williams, the last American to command the Ganassi military post. As a station commander he participated in the Bayang Cota campaign where the Ampuan-Agaos group with 1,500 members occupied several fortified cottas at Bayang along the shore of Lake Lanao. It was Lt. Santos with some of his men who volunteered to place scaling ladders beside the fortified cottas allowing the government troops to penetrate inside the cottas. The campaign was a success although the lieutenant was wounded in that campaign. He was promoted to 1st lieutenant thereafter. While taking a rest due to the wound incurred in the Bayang battle, he decided go back to Malolos, Bulacan and marry his sweetheart, Elisa Angeles. While on a honeymoon, he was ordered to report back to duty in Lanao to become the station commander of Tamparan district and concurrently its deputy governor. Later, promoted to the rank of captain, he preached reading of books to his subordinates as a way to get a "favorable efficiency rating" from him. In 1919, Captain Santos became the first Filipino officer to be assigned provincial military commander of Sulu. In 1920 he was assigned back to Lanao to serve in concurrent capacity as provincial military commander and provincial governor of Lanao. In his own account, Captain Santos reminisced on his assignment in Lanao:

"When I was Governor of Lanao I always made it a point to visit an important headman whenever one is reported sick and if I cannot make the trip, I sent either my deputy or my doctor. It was not long before the people of Lanao realized that they had at the helm of their local government, a man who understood their needs and feelings and who sympathized with them in their sufferings, and I can say with real pride and joy that when I left Lanao, notwithstanding the fact that on occasions peace and order had to be maintained at the expense of killing some of them, the people there considered my departure a big loss to them."

During the term of Governor General Wood, however, the governor of Lanao resigned in his position due to policy differences with Governor-General Wood but managed to be promoted to the rank of major. Later, he was assigned as a district inspector for southern Tagalog, and much later as

adjutant of the Philippine Constabulary. On October 16, 1930 he became a lieutenant colonel occupying the position of Assistant District Commander of Southern Luzon.

Upon retirement from the Philippine Constabulary on December 22, 1930, he became the Director of Bureau of Prisons. While his gallantry and courage was proven in his Mindanao assignment, it was in the Bureau of Prisons that his management and ideas for self-supporting penal institutions developed.

As Director of Bureau of Prisons, he introduced an innovative approach of initiating self-supporting projects by teaching the prisoners useful trades and crafts. Technical experts in agriculture and animal husbandry were employed in the different penal colonies to make these institutions self-sufficient. Under his direction the Bureau of Prisons was a well-run organization as described by General Santos in a speech as quoted from Ramirez:

“If you want an example of it, visit Bureau of Prison whenever you have the opportunity to come to Manila. Occupying nine hectares of land and crowded as it is with building, you will be extraordinarily fortunate if you can find within the premises a single match stick or a piece of waste carelessly thrown away. I am proud to say that this Bureau is today the cleanest in this country and I will venture the assertion that it has no superior in the world. If it were possible to achieve cleanliness in prison with men who are in a sense, social misfits, why can't we make our barracks and our army posts models of sanitation on our communities? Once we have attained this, it would be the simplest matter to keep them always clean and orderly.”

It was during his term that the Davao Penal Colony was founded and the transfer of the Bilibid Prison to Muntinlupa effected. In his tour of Mindanao in search for an ideal site for a penal institution in Mindanao, he visited Koronadal Valley where Don Paco Natividad hosted him. Presumably, he was convinced on the great potential of the valley during this visit in 1932.

With the establishment of the Commonwealth government, the last American Governor-General Frank Murphy thought of awarding those who served the government during the pre-Commonwealth American period. Thus, the long delayed recognition of General Santos' role in the Bayang campaign in Lanao was finally recognized.

On May 4, 1936, following the establishment of the Philippine Army, he was relieved as Director of the Bureau of Prison and appointed Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army with the rank of Major-General. As Chief of Staff, the basic framework for the Philippine Army was established including the training of the reserve force under the National Defense Plan undertaken despite limitations in budget and other realities.

Leadership to be fully understood has to be studied not by traits or qualities of leaders alone but by viewing leadership in relation to a particular group situation that takes into account the leader-follower interaction. As mentioned earlier, in the eyes of the settlers, the fulfillment of their dreams for a “better tomorrow” largely lay in the hands of the major executor of the program.

THE ORIGINALS, THE SETTLERS, AND THE NLSA

Hence, the power held by the manager was not because he was a general or a military man but mainly as the conduit through which the settlers' dreams could be realized.

The strong image of General Santos as the father of the community stemmed not from his strong personality alone but primarily from his pervasive hold on the consciousness of the people as their patron and benefactor. But unlike the usual patron-client relationship, that of General Santos was believed of a pure kind because of his perceived unselfishness and dedication to service. "He was very honest," thus said one settler who recalled that the General continued to pay the loan he incurred when he was still Director of Bureau of Prisons. To this informant, his being indebted just like the rest of them shows that he lived within his means and did not take advantage of his position to benefit himself. His genuine concern for the people gained him the undying gratitude of the people. "He got angry when one was sick and did not seek the services of the doctor," said another informant. His long-time secretary, Rafael C. Aquino, enunciated his unconditional belief in the general when he said: "I could not remember of a wrong decision made by the general as manager of the settlement."

The strong "father image" of General Santos lingered on even when he was no longer in the scene. He easily became a heroic figure in Koronadal valley. As a cherished memory, it is unthinkable today for any settler to talk negatively of him or his administration.

By the very nature of his profession, General Santos was expected to run the Koronadal Valley Settlement in a military way - with precision, discipline, and emphasis on hard work and efficiency. His "hands - on" style of management and constant visit of the individual settlers in the various settlement districts prevented abuse of authority on the side of other NLSA employees. His usual round of inspection placed the other NLSA employees on their toes. As the ultimate authority in the settlement area, several measures were laid down by General Santos which gives one an idea of this particular kind of leader in this particular settlement district, viz:

1. The settlers should wake up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning. Any settler in his pajamas and not in his working clothes after 7:00 o'clock in the morning was given a passage on the next boat bound for Manila;
2. All settlers were required to have a backyard poultry, piggery, and garden. Those who failed to comply were punished in the form of credit suspension in the NLSA Trading Store;
3. Political rallies and other similar activities were banned. This was intended to prevent factionalism among the settlers; and
4. No Chinese were allowed to engage in business within the settlement area.

In the Koronadal Valley settlement areas, besides the general manager, the other NLSA employees considered important by the settlers were those who had direct dealings with them like the doctor, nurses, overseer, assistant overseer, Trading Store in-charge, and perhaps, the tractor operator. It was common to see former NLSA employees running for public office after the war. Moreover, a position held in the NLSA alone was not enough guarantees to win the election. Smooth interpersonal relationship was a major determinant in deciding whom to vote. For instance, one NLSA employee who served as a

doctor of Tupi settlement district failed to win a post-war election because he was perceived to be pro-rich.

D. Institutions Formed

1. Political Institution

By 1941 four settlement districts were established: Lagao, Tupi, Marbel, and Polomolok. These settlement districts, while found within the jurisdiction of the Municipal District of Buayan, were administered separately by the NLSA. Recalling what General Santos told the leaders of the indigenous communities: “to communicate with me should there arise some question which cannot be settled between them and the settlement supervisor”, shows that the settlement area was outside the jurisdiction of the local government.

This reality led to the conclusion that there were two political entities existing within the Southern Koronadal Valley: first, the settlement area managed by officials of the NLSA and second, the Municipal District of Buayan then under the Municipal District of Glan of the Empire Province of Cotabato. The former had jurisdiction over the settlers, the latter, over the original inhabitants of the valley.

Moreover, as pointed out earlier, there was the all-out support to the Koronadal project by the government as seen from the funds given to the NLSA (P20 million). Hence, the NLSA as a government corporation was able to establish irrigation systems, hospitals, schools, mechanized equipments and supplies within the settlement areas. On the other hand, its absence in the areas outside the settlement highlighted the government neglect of the Muslim and Lumad territories. For instance, the Municipal District of Buayan had to house itself in the private residence of Sarip Zainal Abedin in the Muksin-Abedin compound until 1949.

The fast development of Buayan led to the separation of the Municipal District of Buayan from its mother unit, the Municipal District of Glan in 1940. But while, theoretically, Lagao was within the jurisdiction of the Municipal District of Buayan under its first appointed mayor, Mayor Sarip Zainal Abedin, in practice no substantial change in the political arrangement between the NLSA and the municipal district was effected. The informants said that the view of the government was that both Sarip Abedin and General Santos would cooperate with each other for the good of the community. That the two leaders did establish an enduring relationship based on trust was shown by Sarip Abedin's unconditional support of General Santos' decision to deal with the Japanese peacefully for the sake of the people of the valley.

2. Economic Institution

Economic interaction provided the more frequent contact between the newcomers and the original inhabitants of the valley. As more settlers came, the settlers felt the need to establish a “tabo” or market day. A settler narrates one typical story:

“We realized that this place is very favorable for business because the way from Lagao to the Upper Valley is passing through here. This led us to set upon a small market place. After discussing the mechanics of the market we decided to declare

Thursday as the market day. Other settlers started to sell soap, mat, vegetables, etc. This boosted production as marketing the products of the settlers was already accessible to the market place" (Cosep 1996).

The foregoing account talked about the market day established in Klinan 6, which was found on the way from Lagao to the Upper Valley. Since the "tabo" was established on a Thursday in Klinan 6, settlers coming from other settlement areas would come over to sell their wares and buy their needs. Likewise, other settlement areas established their own "tabo". The "tabo" became the meeting place of different occupants of the valley. The B'laans used to come to barter their native ginger, rootcrops, and other produce in exchange for the settlers' clothes, canned goods, and later for money. Lagao was a major area of economic interaction for people of the valley. Likewise, Dadiangas with the Japanese Kuruda was a major trading area in Koronadal Valley. The laying down of the policy of disallowing the Chinese in the settlement area assured that business in the area remained in the hands of Filipinos within the settlement area. Dadiangas where Kuruda was based was outside the settlement area.

Another economic interaction resulted from the settlers' needs for manpower in house construction and in the farm. Twelve hectares of land was difficult for a settler to till. He needed extra hands that were filled in by the natives, mostly the B'laans. B'laan services were also needed in cutting woods for house construction. The B'laans provided the services needed and proved loyal when treated with kindness.

Likewise, the establishment of "tabo" by the settlement areas brought the market places closer to the indigenous inhabitants. Before 1939, Datu Ugan Samling of Tupi tells of the almost one day travel to Lutayan in the present Dulawan to barter their produce in exchange for the things they needed. The distance and the lack of public transportation didn't even allow them to go back to Tupi the same day because of the danger of travel during nighttime. Hence, they had to pass the night in Lutayan and start their journey back to their place the following day.

3. Religious Institution

While the material needs of the settlers were taken care of by the NLSA, it was in the field of religion that various socio-cultural activities found expression. Due to the absence of record on the religious affiliation of the settlers, this paper relied heavily on the study made by Ramirez (1993) and Eric Casiño's work entitled *Mindanao Statecraft and Ecology* (2000) about the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Koronadal Valley.

According to Eric Casiño, the Jesuit mission work in Mindanao suffered a lull with the death of Fr. Jacinto Juanmarti in 1897. Between 1900 and 1936, overseeing Sulu, Cotabato, and Davao mission works were three ageing Jesuits working under the Diocese of Zamboanga. Bishop Luis del Rosario, S.J., then turned for help to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). As a result, seven Oblate pioneers were sent to the Philippines in 1939 to take over the missions in Cotabato and Sulu. These pioneers produced the first Bishop of Cotabato (Mongeau) and the first Bishop of Sulu (McSorley).

Prior to the coming of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), the Catholic mass in the settlement occurred during infrequent visits by visiting dignitaries who brought along a priest during such visits. Due to the absence of roads with only the constabulary launch and horseback riding as the available means of transportation, chapels were invariably located in coastal communities like Buayan and Glan. The construction of different chapels in the interior of Koronadal and Allah valley came as a natural response to the presence of Christian settlers who opened up the rich Koronadal and later the Allah Valley.

The establishment of the first church in Lagao showed a true community spirit. No less than General Santos himself gave the order to the settlement engineers to prepare a church plan. Don Paco Natividad and other established residents volunteered materials for the church while the settlers volunteered their labor during their free time. This community enterprise made the first church in Lagao as "unlike most of the several chapels" since its foundation was concrete and the structure wood. Later, other settlement areas constructed their own chapels. Since the Oblate fathers were few in number, the service in the different chapels had to be scheduled in accordance with the availability of the priests.

The strong community spirit embodying the religious life of the Koronadal community is seen in the choice of a patron saint. Carlos Godmaling of Tampakan, South Cotabato gave this fascinating story:

"In 1940, maybe in the month of November, the settlers were having their worship. During the meeting, the majority was Leyteño from Baybay, Leyte, the settlers were made to choose their patron saint. Some of us suggested Sto. Niño and La Purisima Concepcion. Votation was the basis. During the votation, La Purisima was chosen because Leyteños favored La Purisima. But Capizeños came and they said: "we want to join the votation". So, the first votation was invalid and for the second time, Sto. Nino was chosen because Capizeño joined the votation. That's why, La Purisima Concepcion was running second patron saint."

The practice of deciding important issues through discussion and voting explains in part the building of community spirit. Thus, fiestas held in honor of the patron saint that they themselves chose soon became the major activities of the settlement areas. The Santacrusan, cenakulo, and procession were attended by almost everybody. This provided the necessary respite from the hard and tedious life of a settler.

Barely a year after their arrival, Fr. Mercado, the current president of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, informs us that the Oblates opened their first school, the Notre Dame of Midsayap. Other parish schools followed in other areas. When Notre Dame of Dulawan was opened, the community it served was about 90 percent Muslim and the school built the first mosque on campus for the Muslim students. A proliferation of Notre Dame schools continued to be built after 1946. The Notre Dame University (NDU) of Cotabato serves as the flagship school of the Oblates in Mindanao.

By 1941, the settlement areas came out promisingly productive and progressive. Irrigation systems (Silway irrigation was added to the earlier Klaja irrigation), roads and bridges, piggery and poultry projects, plantation of wide varieties of crops and vegetables, and efficient administration brought about the impressive economic progress of Koronadal Valley. By a generally peaceful interaction of the different ethnic groupings, a peaceful process of accommodation and acculturation was taking place helping define the communities established. The land settlement project was proving a resounding success after the initial difficulties. On his first year of administration, General Santos reported to the Board of Directors of the NLSA in Manila:

“We pass the first year of existence firm in the belief that we carried out to the best of our ability the objectives to which the NLSA was created. After one year of operation, we can say without hesitation that we have more than justified the expenditures incurred in the development of the Koronadal Valley Project. . . We have peopled an otherwise empty valley. And built communities which are model of cleanliness, industry and peace. There is no question that they (the settlers) have found a better home than they left behind. We have proven to the skeptical people that the Filipino farmers can work in peaceful productivity in his community unhampered by vice which saps moral strength. Without doubt, this is the most practical application of the President’s policy of social justice for it has given to the poor man who is willing to work a chance to earn a living through his own honest effort. . . “

Hence, the Koronadal Valley Settlement which extended from Lagao to Marbel rose to a population of 11,016 by February 1941 due to the incessant arrival of new settlers and the families of old settlers who followed them in the settlement. The Municipal District of Buayan was both a defended and developing community in the south when the ugly spectre of war appeared on the Philippine horizon.

Moreover, a discordant note in this otherwise optimistic view of Koronadal Valley in 1941 was the reality that the presence of settlement areas exclusively and increasingly peopled by Christian settlers did not augur well to the native inhabitants of the valley. The presence of well-developed communities with modern infrastructure for development in their midst emphasized the neglect of the indigenous communities. Failure to provide arrangement on land reservation for the natives placed them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the newcomers to the valley, the migrant-settlers, who had everything - assurance of support and ownership of land, education, knowledge of land laws, etc. But as of the outbreak of the war, this inherent unequal power relationship was not yet apparent since the vast Koronadal Valley could still accommodate the number of newcomers. In the meantime, the defended community had to face the greatest threat to its existence - the Japanese invaders.

