

Agent of Pacification: Prelude of the American Public Education in Capiz, Philippines, 1900-1905

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Abstract: The Bureau of Education created by the 2nd Philippine Commission in 1901 was unquestionably viewed as a valuable public institution which strategically advanced American colonial interests in the Philippines. Its formation was based on the fundamental belief held by the McKinley-led U.S. government that a colonial public school system for the Filipino children could gradually dampen anti-occupation resistance. Thus, the American-sponsored Bureau of Education played its vital role as agent of Pacification obviously aimed at earning trust and support from the inhabitants of the province of Capiz beginning its establishment in 1901. This paper explored the role of the American public school system, directly carried out by the Bureau of Education, as an integral part of the pacification campaign specifically in the Visayan province of Capiz during the early years of American occupation between 1900 and 1905. This paper examined the two basic functions the Bureau of Education assumed as an agent of pacification; and underscored how it contributed to the capitulation of the entire province.

I. INTRODUCTION

The inhabitants of the province of Capiz (Ilaya and Aklan) exhibited opposite responses on the presence of the American occupation forces beginning 1900. But one thing was explicitly clear to the locals – the American government intended to occupy Panay island and the entire archipelago as its colonial territory. That was an inevitable reality they had to contend with. Several groups of local guerillas in Capiz stubbornly resisted American occupation forces, and the newly-organized Philippine Constabulary (PC), deployed in the province between 1900 and the first quarter of 1905. Series of armed encounters between the two contending forces were commonplace during the early years of occupation amid the establishment of a provincial government and other civil institutions, e.g. the Bureau of Education, Board of Public Health, and the Philippine Constabulary, which constituted a new form of colonial administration. That was the first response demonstrated by certain groups of the local population. The other response may be aptly described as pacific and collaborative; a stark contrast unleashed by indigenous armed resistance groups. Obviously, the pacific response came from the educated and wealthy class. They were the ones who attended the people's conference or assembly hosted by the 2nd Philippine Commission led by Governor General William Howard Taft on April 14-15, 1901 which resulted to the formation of the civil government in the province of Capiz. Taft appointed a local politician, Simplicio Jugo Vidal as provincial governor of Capiz, and Simeon Mobo Reyes from Aklan as provincial secretary (RPC 1901,

150). The establishment of the provincial civil government of Capiz received tremendous support from the educated and wealthy class – the *principalia* - of the said province. A group of local residents who participated in the public assembly, sponsored by the Taft Commission, also unhesitatingly raised the immediate introduction of the American public school system; a clear indication of the complete public acceptance of the American sovereign rule in the province. Thus, the Bureau of Education, alongside other vital civil institutions like the provincial government, Board of Health, the Philippine Constabulary and many others, inaugurated their initial role as agents of pacification closely linked to the on-going occupation campaign in many parts of the country including the province of Capiz carried out by the 2nd Philippine Commission (RPC 1904, 122-126, 321-325, 399-401).

This paper examined the vital role of the Bureau of Education in the pacification campaign of the province of Capiz during the early years of the American occupation. It highlighted the underlying functions of the Bureau as a colonial institution that provided formal basic education and technical skills for manual labor (gardening, sewing) to the young generation of the local population, and produced valuable citizens who took part in building a progressive Philippine society that was based on American colonial interests.

Vital Functions of the Bureau of Education

The Bureau of Education played two important functions during the early years of the establishment of American rule in the Philippines. First, it served as an agent of pacification; the public school system it instituted all over the country provided a benevolent approach in gaining trust from the population. Secondly, the Bureau of Education implemented a system of public instruction that educated and trained Filipinos, especially the young generation, to become productive and law-abiding citizens who would view the administration of public affairs within the framework of American interests. These functions were evidently manifested as the Bureau of Education steadily implemented its system of instruction in the province of Capiz since 1900.

While armed hostilities persisted between the revolutionary forces and the American occupation troops, US President William McKinley also entertained an amicable approach. Such option was clearly expressed in his official policy on the Philippine question:

...it should be the earnest wish and paramount aim ... to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of the free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION. (McKinley, cited in Blount 1912, 150)

Obviously shared by higher officials of the American occupation force that education was a valuable agent of pacification, Brig. General P.P. Hughes instructed Fr. W.D. McKinnon, Catholic priest and chaplain of the US military troops, to direct the reopening of schools in Manila in September 1898. The following year, as the Filipino-American War began to unroll, George P. Anderson, was momentarily appointed as general superintendent of the public instruction in Manila. Under his brief supervision, American soldiers were assigned to conduct classroom classes in existing schools in Manila. The American soldiers introduced the English language to the young Filipinos.

Amid the heightened armed conflict already extended in many parts of the country, the 1st Philippine Commission, headed by Professor Jacob G. Schurman from Cornell University, officially recommended to the McKinley Administration the establishment of a free, adequate public school system in the Philippines (RPC to the President 1901). The Commission also endorsed the importance of construction of school buildings including the procurement of supplies of learning equipment for both primary and secondary schools (Educational Act of 1901).

Thus the non-violent pacification campaign of the US military proceeded against the backdrop of the armed conflict with the Filipino revolutionary army which cost innocent lives and the disruption of their economic activities. Thereby, the Department of Public Instruction – the precursor of the Bureau of Education – was immediately organized on March 30, 1900 headed by a military officer, Captain Alfred Todd. The main task of the Department of Public Instruction was to set up a centralized system of basic public education all over the country. Todd’s view of education as an instrument of pacification is quite instructive:

...the primary goal of the army’s teaching program was not to educate Filipinos, but rather to pacify them by convincing them of American good will. The Army’s schools were, in effect, a mere adjunct of its military activities. (Todd Cited in May 1976, 137)

Guerilla operations attributed to the indigenous armed resistance movement to American rule were common in the province of Capiz between 1900 and 1905. This was the same period when the American public school system was in its formative stage. These local guerrillas were simply dismissed by the American authorities as *ladrones*, a term equivalent to thieves, bandits, outlaws, and criminals. But Filipino historians viewed them as nationalists and freedom-

fighters whose mission was to continue their active resistance to American rule. A systematic approach of suppression of Filipino nationalism was employed by the 2nd Philippine Commission or Taft Commission as a response to the persistent armed operations against the American soldiers all over the country. To quell a possible resurgence of a vibrant Filipino nationalism, the Taft Commission enacted several laws such as the Sedition Law of 1901, Libel Law, Brigandage Law of 1902, and the Flag Law of 1907. Example, the Flag Law criminalized an act that displays in public view any flags, banners, emblems or devices with the aim of encouraging rebellion or insurrection against the American authority. Another approach was the formation of a native anti-insurgency armed force known as the Insular Constabulary (IC) headed by American army officials. The Insular Constabulary was formed by virtue of Act No. 175, enacted by the Philippine Commission on July 18, 1901(Hurley 2011). The Philippine Commission tasked the Insular Constabulary to work for the maintenance of law, peace and order in the country. Since its inception, members of the Insular Constabulary, which was renamed as Philippine Constabulary (PC), were immediately deployed to provinces where resistance movement remained rife. Thus, the presence of PC detachment in every town in the province of Capiz was visible, and its operations aimed at subduing local guerrillas were felt by the beleaguered inhabitants.

In his annual report submitted to the Philippine Commission, dated July 31, 1903, Brig. General H.T. Allen of the US Army and Chief of the Philippine Constabulary, declared that there were approximately 154 members of the Constabulary deployed strategically in different parts of Capiz headed by a total of five (5) American army officers ranked as Inspectors. Below is an extract – which focuses mainly on Capiz – from a complete list that is part of General Allen’s official report:

Table I

| Town | Inspector | Men | Officers |
|-----------------|-----------|-----|--|
| Capiz | 3 | 49 | 2nd Lt. Carel Knipp 1st. Lt. R.W. Jones 3rd Lt. J.J. Guild |
| Calivo (Kalibo) | 1 | 13 | 1st Lt. P. Lyons |
| Dao | | 12 | |
| Ibajay | | 10 | |
| Libacao | | 7 | |
| Maayon | | 6 | |
| Mambusao | | 7 | |
| Pilar | | 8 | |
| Pontevedra | 1 | 14 | 3rd Lt. A.g. Barber |
| Rosario | | 6 | |
| Tapas (Tapaz) | | 10 | |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----|--|
| Dumarao, temporary | | 6 | |
| Macato, temporary | | 6 | |
| Total | 5 | 154 | |

Source: 4th Annual Report of the Philippine Commission, 1903

Note that Pontevedra was the second town, next to the municipality of Capiz (now Roxas City), with the highest number of members of the Philippine Constabulary, supervised by an American officer, 3rd Lt. A.G. Barber. One explanation why the Constabulary deployed more of its forces in Pontevedra was because incidents of guerrilla activities were more frequent compared to other towns, where skirmishes were also common, like Dao, Maayon, Mambusao, Pilar, Tapaz, and Dumarao. Interestingly, an American lady teacher, Mary H. Fee, who rendered her teaching services in Capiz during the early years of the occupation, describes in her personal account the town of Pontevedra as an “insurrecto town, thirsting for American gore” (Fee 2008, 150). Fee’s account in reference to Pontevedra was accurate as bands of guerrillas led separately by Julian (Bertuoso?) and Gregorio Degala almost freely carried out their anti-government operations around the hills of Pontevedra and its neighboring town, Pilar. A guerilla leader from Aklan valley known only to the Americans as Ompong (or Omopong) was active in the areas of Malinao and Macato.

As mentioned earlier, as the Bureau of Education began organizing the public school system in the province alongside the arrival of a handful of American teachers who served as front liners in teaching English language and American culture in schools, the forces of the Philippine Constabulary pushed harder its campaign against the remaining bands of local freedom fighters. These twin approaches forced the active guerrillas to submission, and accepted the amnesty offered by acting Governor General Luke E. Wright sometime in 1902. Facilitated by Capiz governor Simplicio Jugo Vidal, several groups of local freedom fighters or guerillas finally gave up their cause and turned over their arms to the government. Those who surrendered as identified by Vidal in his 1902 Annual Report were Laureano Lucas, Pedro Lacana, Policarpio Llorente, Aquilino Aquino, Ciriaco Dapetillo, Estanislao Lopez, Pedro Lucas, and Gregorio Llorente whose areas of guerrilla operations were in Jagnaya and Jamindan, including the small group of Maximo Lopez from Mambusao (4th Annual RPC 1903, 774).

Capiz Governor Vidal considered the surrender of a local guerilla leader, Julian Bertuoso and six (6) other armed men at Tinagong Dagat (part of Pontevedra) on February 22, 1905 as the most significant accomplishment of his administration’s campaign to end guerilla activities in the province. But Vidal simply viewed Bertuoso and his band as mere robbers, thieves, or *ladrones* whose operations were concentrated within the areas of the municipalities of Panay, Pontevedra, and Pilar. Facilitated by Vidal, who enjoyed the

support of the municipal police force from the towns of Pontevedra and Pilar, Bertuoso and his men officially surrendered to the civil government which ensured the conclusion of anti-American resistance in the province. Vidal observed:

Since the surrender of this band the municipalities in the eastern region of the province – that is to say, Panay, Pontevedra, and Pilar – have enjoyed complete tranquility, not the least, disturbance, robbery of carabao, or assault by thieves having taken place, and if the loss of carabao is sometimes reported, it is due to the fault of the herders or persons having them in charge. (6th Annual Report of the Philippine Commission 1905, 200)

In the said 1905 official report, the Capiz governor also emphasized the continuing development of the operations of the public school system in the province. Prior to the surrender of the last group of guerrillas – which the authorities simply dismissed as mere criminals – construction of school-buildings in various parts of the province began. These projects were funded by the provincial government. During the school year 1904-1905, the Division of Capiz reported that out of 12,505 enrollees, 9,828 pupils who regularly attended their classes. The number of pupils significantly increased in the said school-year in contrast to the previous period (1903-04) which only registered 1,000 enrollees. Hence it is safe to conclude that the Bureau of Education steadily gained public support as it pursued the American public school system in the province of Capiz. As the local inhabitants completely embraced the public education system instituted by the colonial government, the indigenous anti-American resistance groups, eventually, reached its dissolution.

Another equally important function carried out by the Bureau of Education was to produce a young generation of skilled and educated Filipinos who could serve specific roles in achieving socio-economic progress alongside their participation in government affairs, and at the same time, consistently worked for American colonial interests. Hence the immediate introduction of a public school system – patterned to the American model – was integral and imperative clearly expressed in the official instruction issued by US President McKinley to William H. Taft, who headed the 2nd Philippine Commission on April 7, 1900. McKinley decreed:

It will be the duty of the commission to promote and extend, and as they find occasion, to improve, the system of education already inaugurated by the military authorities. In doing this they should regard as of first importance the extension of a system of primary education which shall be free to all, and which shall tend to fit the people for the duties of citizenship and for the ordinary avocations of a civilized community. (Reports of the Philippine Commission 1904, 10)

The phrase, “duties of citizenship”, may be understood within the context of the imposition of American

sovereignty in the Philippines manifested in the two important documents, e.g., the Treaty of Paris and the Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation. Within this framework, the Bureau of Education adopted a school system that cultivated a colonial mindset in conformity with the American interests. The reshaping of the collective minds of the young Filipinos began with the adoption of the English language as a medium of instruction. The use of English language in schools, from primary to secondary courses, was personally advanced by McKinley in his official instruction or directive to the 2nd Philippine Commission in 1900.

Few months before the civil government in the province of Capiz was organized, the Philippine Commission already enacted the Educational Act of 1901 or Act No. 74 on January 21, 1901. The sole purpose of the said law was to create a government agency whose task was to establish a highly-organized public school system in the entire archipelago. The agency was called the Department of Public Instruction which was later re-named as Bureau of Education headed by a General Superintendent. The General Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction was tasked to inaugurate primary schools in every town (or pueblo) in the Philippines, construct schoolhouses (for primary and secondary levels), administer the procurement of school supplies, and divide the country into several school divisions.

As declared by the Taft Commission in consonance with McKinley's instruction, English language was adopted as the medium of instruction in the public schools, and the purchase of learning materials, e.g., textbooks, maps, globes, charts, stationery and writing materials were funded by the insular government (or the Philippine government). These materials were distributed to different municipalities all over the country. Nearly one thousand (1,000) qualified American teachers were hired by the Department of Public Instruction who served eventually as the purveyors of English language and American culture in the Philippines. The first batch of American teachers sent by the US Government to the Philippines was delivered by five (5) ships – the *Meade*, *Sherman*, *Sheridan*, *Buford*, and *Thomas*. The *US Thomas* was the most popular ship because it transported 540 passengers; the largest group of American teachers who arrived in the country on August 21, 1901 (Lardizabal in Kimuell-Gabriel 1999, 250). Derived from the name of the ship, *Thomas*, American teachers deployed in various areas in the Philippines were called as the *Thomasites*. The introduction of the English language in the public school system as a medium of instruction plus the arrival of a big number of American teachers who served as purveyors of Western culture marked the commencement of American influence in every aspect of Philippine society at the advent of the 20th century.

The curriculum for the primary school – from Grade 1 to 4 – gave importance to the study of English language, reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic including basic

vocational learnings such as industrial works and drawing (Osias 1921). The subjects taught to pupils enrolled in Grades 5, 6, and 7 are indicated in Table II.

Table II. General Intermediate Course

| Grade V | Grade VI | Grade VII |
|--|--|--|
| Conversational English, Composition, Grammar | Conversational English, Composition, Grammar | Conversational English, Composition, Grammar |
| Reading & Spelling | Reading, Spelling | Reading, Spelling |
| Arithmetic | Arithmetic | Arithmetic |
| Writing, Music | Writing, Music | Philippine History & Government |
| Geography | Geography | Physiology, Hygiene, Sanitation |
| Drawing | Drawing | Drawing |
| Industrial courses | Industrial courses | Industrial Courses |

Source: Barrio Life and Barrio Education by Camilo Osias (1921)

Since 1902, a limited number of secondary schools were instituted in many parts of the country; that included in the province of Capiz. Secondary instruction was also provided free for all residents of a province who wanted to pursue high school education. Areas of studies incorporated in the secondary instruction were liberal arts, commerce and trade, normal school (or education), agricultural and manual trainings (6th Annual Report, Philippine Commission 1905, Part 4). Specific subjects offered were the following: English Literature, History, Algebra, Sciences (e.g., Botany, Zoology), Art Trades and Agriculture including foreign language studies as free electives like Latin, Spanish and French. Barrows, who served as the General Superintendent of the Bureau of Education from the latter part of 1902 until 1909, designed the entire secondary school as a training ground for students who could, after completion of the studies, engage in gainful profession and entrepreneurial endeavors, or pursue college education. He wrote:

...courses which are ... offered are five and take from three to four years: a course in literature, history, and the sciences...will prepare a student for advanced standing in undergraduate work in American colleges – in fact it is our expectation that the satisfactory completion of two years of this course will enable a student to enter college in the United States; a course in teaching, will qualify a student to teach all intermediate grades; a course in commerce, designed to fit young men for business or industrial undertakings and to provide a highly trained body of men for the civil service; a course in agriculture, to prepare young men for expert farming superintendents, and a course in arts and crafts, for the training of workmen. (6th Annual Report 1905 Part 4, 411)

Clearly, the Bureau of Education set up an educational program aimed at producing a young generation of Filipinos who were capable of seeking advanced professional studies (teaching, business, civil service) and those citizens who opted for acquiring technical skills like

farming and craftsmanship. Alongside the acquisition of either advanced academic knowledge or vocational, technical skills, the Bureau successfully imparted a worldview via the teaching of English language and imposition of certain laws that promoted American colonial interests but at the same time suppressed the development of Filipino nationalism.

II. CONCLUSION

The gradual end of violent operations by local resistance movement in Capiz unfolded between 1901 and 1905 probed the efficiency of the pacification campaign strategically launched by the entire civil institutions that served American colonial interests. The Bureau of Education, under the supervision of the Secretary of Public Instruction, took a specific role which did not require coercion and violence. Instead, benevolent acts were displayed before the beleaguered local population by offering them free formal instruction and training particularly to the younger generation which provided, eventually, income earning opportunities. The long-term benefits generated by the American public school system enjoyed by the inhabitants negated the need for armed resistance to American rule. Thus, one main reason why local resistance groups in Capiz steadily weakened and finally dissipated was due to the absence of sufficient support from the people who were beneficiaries of the perceived benevolent acts emanated from the Bureau of Education. Thus, the early years of American occupation in the province of Capiz witnessed the advent of the American public school system as a colonial institution.

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