

Food Shortage: Filipino – American Cooperation Against Famine, 1900-1910

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ABSTRACT

This study has reviewed the ability of the Filipino farmers in the island of Panay, part of Central Philippines, confront the food shortage as they sought for abundant harvest and ensure the steady supply of food needed by the hard-pressed population. This study investigates how the 2nd Philippine Commission and the local population averted the outbreak of famine in the island of Panay. It traces the existing indicators that famine may break out and become a potential threat to the population of the said island at the advent of the 20th century. This paper also probes how the farming communities and their provincial governments addressed the problem of food shortage, and stresses the significant role of three colonial agencies – the Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Works, and Bureau of Public Health – which the Philippine Commission utilized in its campaign against food shortage.

Keywords: food shortage, famine, epidemic, Philippine Commission, agricultural production

INTRODUCTION

Food shortage was a familiar encounter for the inhabitants of the island of Panay in Central Philippines during the Spanish colonial rule. The provinces of Panay, at that time, were Capiz (with Aklan valley), Antique, and Iloilo. Between the period 1566 and 1574, thousands of inhabitants of Panay were ravaged by famine as locust infestations destroyed their crops which resulted to the shortage of food supply (Newson, 2011). Newson (2011) also cited that famine helped shrink the island's population which was facilitated further by other factors e.g. epidemic and ill-treatment by exploitative Spanish officials who extracted tributes and labor services from the natives. James F. Warren (2018), on the one hand, concluded that food shortages in the Philippines, including the Visayas, during the Spanish colonial period were caused by weather disturbances like typhoons, floods, and drought.

These external factors that depopulated Panay as pointed out by Newson were tempered by steady economic growth beneficial to the people during the 19th century. These three provinces – Iloilo, Antique, and Capiz – transformed into rice granaries alongside Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Camarines, and Bulacan (Legarda, 1999). This development allowed Iloilo and Capiz, in particular, establish their own rice-exporting ports. Aside from rice production, these Visayan provinces also grew profitable crops like abaca and sugarcane, and some local entrepreneurs invested in lucrative industries like the production of sacks, wine, and textile. Such economic growth generated employment opportunities and improved financial capacity of the hardworking Visayans that freed them from the threats of deprivation and famine. But such relief has always been temporary since typhoons, drought, floods, and locust infestation are natural weather disturbances.

Thus, shortfall of food supply, and subsequently hunger, also occurred during the opening years of the twentieth century in the said Visayan island – Panay – and in many parts of the country. Selected literature

(scholarly works) related to the encounters between the Filipinos and American officials during the early years of the occupation are mostly devoted to armed conflict and how the US government established its colonial policies over the entire archipelago. James H. Blount's *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912*, published in 1913 is a classic work which discussed extensively the establishment of American rule in the Philippines. Blount (1913) preferred immediate independence for the Philippines, and the US should resolutely promote world peace. Samuel K. Tan's *The Filipino-American War, 1899-1913* mainly explored the armed conflict between the Filipino revolutionary army and the American expeditionary troops. Tan (2002) confirmed that the war for independence resulted to more than 200,000 casualties for the Filipinos, and 6,000 lives also perished from the side of the Americans. Furthermore, the US spent around \$300 million in its military campaign, while hundred thousand of Filipinos lost their economic productivity as numerous towns were torched to the ground, crops were destroyed, and large number of valuable farm animals decimated (Tan, 2002, p. 248). This economic aspect of the war served as one of the factors that led to the food shortage in Panay and in many parts of the country.

This study takes interest on the incidents of deprivation and hunger precipitated by food shortage in the three provinces of Panay which became visible beginning 1899 until 1902, and examines how the 2nd Philippine Commission and the vast farming communities in Panay address the problem of food shortage. The 2nd Philippine Commission was established by the US government in 1900 as a civil government tasked to administer the public affairs in the Philippines as an American colony.

This study argues that both local farmers and the American-sponsored civil governments in the provinces of Panay island in Central Philippines also known as Western Visayas – successfully averted famine between the period of 1900 and 1910. Thus, a huge number of the entire population of the island did not experience the inherent conditions of great famine such as persistent shortage of food, severe malnutrition of affected population, and increased number of deaths from extreme hunger and diseases. **Objectives of this study** are the following: 1) it traces the existing indicators – or its symptoms – that made famine a potential threat to the population of Panay during the opening years of the twentieth century; and 2) it explores how did the communities in the farming villages of the said Visayan island and their provincial governments, also known as Provincial Boards, respond to the impending, but preventable, food crisis which confronted the local population. It also highlights the functions of the three colonial agencies in their campaign for food security. These government agencies were the following: a) Bureau of Agriculture, b) Bureau of Public Works, and the c) Bureau of Public Health or Insular Board of Health. This study focuses mainly on the three provinces of Panay like Iloilo, Capiz (including Aklan valley), and Antique between the period 1900 and 1910. These were the early years of the twentieth century when problems of dwindling agricultural yields, food shortage, and poverty haunted the population of the island. This was the period, too, when American rule in the Philippines was in its infancy.

METHOD AND SOURCES

This study adopts the approaches of historical research. Archival materials specifically public documents produced and published by the American-sponsored Philippine Commission between 1900 and 1910 were collected from the National Library of the Philippines and reliable online sources. These archival materials are treated as primary sources such as the series of official reports of the 2nd Philippine Commission published by the U.S. Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department between the period 1901 and 1910. This study embraces the idealist model propounded by an English philosopher and historian, Robin George Collingwood. Collingwood (1945) viewed history as the “study of human affairs reenacted in the historian’s own mind”. The historian does not only describe events and ideas conceived, but he/she also interprets the past, i.e. thought and events, based on his own perspective. Collingwood argued:

The historian not only re-enacts past thought, he re-enacts it in the context of his own knowledge and

therefore, in re-enacting it criticizes it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever errors he can discern in it. (1945, p. 215)

This idealist model of conception of history emphasized the importance of analytical research method. The analytical approach of the study of history mainly investigates, and seeks explanation, why events occurred, or why individuals or a community made certain decisions and actions that set off a historical situation (Gilderhaus, 1996, pp. 77-83). Thus, in this approach, the researcher carefully examines relevant data, provided by selected primary sources, and derive insights from it. This method guides the historian or researcher discern the thought present in the event under study.

Secondary sources also serve as valuable materials in historical research. Secondary sources in historical studies pertain to “works produced after the event has taken place, and are usually an assessment or commentary of events, people, or institutions” (Camagay, et al., 2018, p. 7). Examples of secondary sources are references, textbooks, encyclopedia, academic journals, monograph, theses, and dissertations. These types of source material also guided this paper in the interpretation of the meanings of information or data extracted from primary sources.

Illustration I: Philippine Map w/ Panay Island



Source: www.profilpelajar.com/article/Panay

Retrieved: November 29, 2023

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Famine: Potential Threat

Between 1899 and early months of 1902, food supplies in the island were already in decline. The sight of

hunger was evident in many villages; famine – a severe condition of hunger – was imminent. Calamities such as drought, plaques, epidemic, and typhoons denied the hardworking population of their natural ability to produce sufficient supplies of food and other resources for their sustenance. It was a period described by the inhabitants of the island of Panay in their own language – *Hiligaynon* – as *tig-gulutom* which means, a period of hunger and deprivation. *Hiligaynon* is one of the major Philippine languages widely spoken in Panay, province of Negros Occidental, and some parts of Mindanao island. *Tig-gulutom* is linked to the lack of sufficient supply of food, serious financial problem, and joblessness. *Tig-gulutom* spells material deprivation.

Widespread poverty was already seen by General Ananias Diokno, who served as Politico-Military Governor of the province of Capiz during the height of the Filipino-American War. In Diokno's official report sent to Apolinario Mabini (chief adviser of the Philippine government), in 1899, he explained that collection of taxes in the province was no longer feasible because the people were impoverished and did no longer have financial resources. He wrote:

In economic affairs, I regret to [have to – sic] inform the honorable President that this province is one of those which is at the present time in a state of poverty, and due to this anomaly it is impossible to collect the citizen certificate tax, and, consequently, it is often occurs, that even the most pressing requirements of the government remain unsatisfied. (Diokno in Taylor 1971, p. 543)

The two succeeding wars, the 1896 Uprising and the Filipino-American War, impoverished the inhabitants of Capiz in 1899. Both commercial and agricultural activities were disrupted by these armed conflicts affecting the production of food supplies for the communities. The local elite of Capiz already felt the economic debacle caused by the war, and a group of men, obviously coming from this educated class, sent a petition letter to the Politico-Military Governor of Capiz, General Diokno, asking him to end the armed resistance and embrace American rule in the island of Panay. Here is an excerpt from the petition which bore 26 signatories:

. . . It is high time that the smell of powder should no longer fill the air of our fields and hills; that the whistle of bullets should cease; that *our abandoned fields should again be cultivated and wealth accrue* [italics mine]; and in a word, it is already time for us to seek peace . . . we shall be able to see the aggrandizement which we can never expect to attain by strife, in view of its sterility which has been proven by events that lead to nothing but our ruin and perdition. (Taylor 1971, p. 618)

Quite clearly, war interrupted people from seeking productive and profitable economic pursuits. Stalling of economic activities, particularly agricultural production, would also result to food shortages and hunger.

Provincial governments of the three provinces of Panay described the worsening shortage of food supply between the period 1899 and 1902 as famine, which also means widespread hunger. Food shortage was caused by drought, plaques, and scarcity of work animals, e.g. *carabaos* (water buffalo) and cattles. Armed conflict aggravated the crisis. Diseases like rinderpest (a contagious viral disease affecting water buffalo and cattle) and surra infected large number of farm animals that either slaughtered or directly died from the said infirmities. In Capiz, farm animals like *carabaos*, pigs, chickens, and horses perished from these diseases. This grim condition was exacerbated by the spread of illnesses like malaria and cholera which affected the populations of the island. Capiz Governor Simplicio Jugo Vidal narrated:

. . . inhabitants had scarcely recovered from the effects of the famine of the year 1901 when malarial fevers and the grippe caused great ravages among them that in some pueblos, like Sigma and Macato, large families fell victims to disease, and there were days that no available healthy or able-bodied men strong enough to bury the dead . . . This picture of misfortune was darkened by the appearance of cholera during the month of September. From its virulence it is to be feared that it will claim . . . number of victims during the year 1903. (Vidal in Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1904)

In Iloilo province, the condition was equally disturbing. Spread of diseases and lack of work animals stalled farm productivity. Iloilo Governor Martin Delgado provided a fearless assessment of the economic situation of the province amid the devastating effects of rinderpest and malaria that unfolded within the troubling years of 1901 and 1902. The economic condition of the province was described as “dejected and critical” as available vast fields remained uncultivated because most of the tillers were debilitated by serious illness either by cholera or malaria, while remaining healthy men were less productive due to the absence of work animals that used to aid them in their labors (Bureau of Insular Affairs, Part 1, 1904).

The situation in Antique appeared less worrisome compared to its neighbors. Its *pueblos*, also known as municipalities or towns, that were considered as large producers of rice like Sibalom, Enga?a, San Pedro, San Remegio, and its capital, Antique, harvested sufficient supply of rice in 1901. Furthermore, all of its *pueblos* successfully grew crops like corn, sweet potatoes (or kamote), coffee, and cocoa in 1902. This enabled the population staved off severe hunger or famine. Incident of food shortages, however, remained a possibility as farmers still faced lingering problems like scarcity of work animals and drought that impeded productive agricultural activities. Any province could not rely alone on the success of its agricultural production as the local economy also needs vibrant commercial activities and trade facilitated by infrastructures (bridges, roads) and transportation system that generate profits for local entrepreneurs and employment for the working class. Like Capiz and Iloilo, the province of Antique lacked these requirements mentioned above that could help pump-prime its debilitated industries. Angel Salazar, Sr., who served as Acting Governor of Antique, clearly saw this deficiency:

Commerce and trading show no signs of life, undoubtedly due to the very bad condition of the means of communication, and the resources of the forests are not utilized for lack of transportation facilities. (Salazar in Bureau of Insular Affairs, Part 1, 1904).

In sum, the population of the three provinces of Panay witnessed food shortage during the period of 1899 and 1902. This crisis made the inhabitants, particularly in the vast farming villages impoverished and desperate. The scarcity of food was caused by intervening factors, e.g. drought, epidemic, plaques, armed conflict, and typhoon (a periodic destructive weather disturbance). Provincial governments of this island unhesitatingly described the grim condition in their provinces as famine as reflected in their official reports submitted to the insular government – the 2nd Philippine Commission.

Intervention from the Colonial Government

The 2nd Philippine Commission did not view the growing food deprivation in the island of Panay as severe hunger or famine that occurred during the period, 1899 and 1902. For the Americans, food deprivation experienced by the inhabitants of Panay and many provinces in the country had not yet reached the severity of hunger that happened in British India and China during the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century where millions of its inhabitants perished from starvation. Thus, the general condition was not viewed as famine; but it was impending. Famine is defined as a persistent and shortages of food which causes severe malnutrition, emaciation, and increase of deaths in the affected population due to acutestarvation and diseases (Basu, 2023). The Philippine condition had not reached this category of hunger yet. But it was obviously seen by American officials as alarming which requires immediate solution.

Such serious economic disturbance is preventable if the existing government and the affected communities could work together minimize the deprivation, find immediate and long-term solutions, and evade the devastation an outbreak of famine can inflict to the vulnerable population. Obviously, the 2nd Philippine Commission headed by Civil Governor William Howard Taft appeared decisive as he addressed the impending widespread starvation in Panay and many parts of the country. The Commission enacted a law – able-bodied men to dig one-meter deep trenches and built galvanized iron sheets or corrugated iron sheets around near

known as ACT No. 517 approved on November 12, 1902 – whose objective was prevent the outbreak of famine in the provinces of the Philippine archipelago. The 2nd Philippine Commission, by virtue of Act No. 517, ordered all municipal presidents (town mayors) to announce to the public the possible outbreak of widespread hunger, gather the people and discuss with them the current problem of food shortage. The said law emphasized that municipal administrations must urge their communities to immediately cultivate their farms:

. . . to secure the necessary seed and to plant quick-growing crops of corn, camotes, rice, or other food plants, whichever may furnish the most abundant crop in the particular locality, sufficient in quantity to produce the . . . food for the people of the municipality for the coming year. (Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1904, p. 213)

The 2nd Philippine Commission allowed and encouraged the people living in the municipalities or towns all over the country to cultivate public lands available for cultivation of crops. Clearly, the Americans wanted a bountiful agricultural yields and avoid famine to happen the next year, 1903. Colonial government agencies were also mobilized in the campaign for the prevention of famine. These government agencies that collaborated with the farming communities in the provinces of Panay were the: Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Health, and the Bureau of Public Works. The Bureau of Agriculture was established by virtue of Act No. 261 on October 8, 1901 while the Bureau of Health – created by another enactment or law – was formed on July 1, 1901. The Bureau of Public Works appeared few years later by virtue of the Reorganization Act in 1905.

The Bureau of Agriculture

The provincial governments procured quick-growing seeds like corn, *kamote* (camote) or sweet potato, and rice from the insular government through the Bureau of Agriculture. These seeds were distributed to every towns for cultivation. The collective effort of the farming communities earned positive result. In the province of Antique, Governor Angel Salazar reported in 1906 that tillers harvested abundant supplies of various crops such as corn, sweet potatoes, beans, and rice which he described as the best year for the province since 1899 (Salazar in Bureau of Insular Affairs, 6th Annual Report, 1906, p. 188).

The province of Capiz – located in the northern part of the island – also gradually lifted itself from food deprivation as farmers successfully harvested same crops planted by their counterparts from the province of Antique. Most of the villages of Capiz produced sufficient supply of rice for domestic consumption between the months of May and June in 1906 due to abundant rainfall which provided amount of water for a favorable cultivation of the said crop – a Filipino staple food. Sugarcane plantation also came to life after its cultivation was interrupted during the armed revolution against Spanish colonial rule. Growers of sugarcane finally harvested their valued crop that was in demand in Iloilo and Manila. Thus the restoration of agriculture in the province had encouraged other forms of commercial activities beginning 1904 and 1905. Here is an excerpt of the official report of Capiz Governor Antonio Habana dated August 1, 1906 which reflected his optimism:

The economic condition of the province is relatively better than last year. The past years, inhabitants of this province encountered food shortage, and rice – the principal food – had to be acquired at high prices from Manila. At present, the province has sufficient supply of rice for local consumption as farmers came up with abundant harvest (Habana in Bureau of Insular Affairs, 7th Annual Report 1907, p. 217).

Agriculturists from the Bureau also collaborated with the provincial governments and the farming communities on how to suppress the spread of locusts that destroyed the crops. The Bureau of Agriculture adopted three approaches on how to exterminate swarm of locusts in the provinces: a) it mobilized farming villagers to locate breeding areas of larvae (young locusts; b) municipal presidents or town leaders deployed Secretary Smith in his 1905 official report for the fiscal year, 1904-1905:

the location where locusts congregated; and lastly d) the Bureau introduced types of insecticide using spraying apparatus. Agriculture Inspector David B. MacKie (1910, p. 230) described the “trench method”, as introduced by the Filipinos to the Americans:

Upon completion of the trench, a fence about 5 meters long and 1 meter high should be built and placed in the shape of the letter V, with large opening toward the swarm and the small one emptying into the trench. This structure may be composed of tin, boards, or any smooth material that insects are unable to climb. . . . When everything is ready a group of six or eight men with flags or branches surround the swarm and drive it into the trench. Once inside the trench, the men would exterminate the hoppers using branches or boards.

This method was known in many parts of the country, but its result was insignificant. Thus, the Americans introduced types of insecticide that can eradicate this kind of pestilence. Insecticides were sprayed over the areas where swarm of locusts was present. These methods, encouraged by the insular government, mobilized farming villages in its campaign against locust infestation. The effective suppression – though temporary – provided farmers breathing space as they grew their crops free from the destructive presence of locusts.

Based on the official report submitted by the province of Antique, its farmers successfully increased their rice harvest in 1905 and early months of 1906 which was higher than what they had in the previous year of 1904. The province of Iloilo, on the other hand, gradually revived the cultivation of its leading crops, amid the danger of drought and intermittent appearance of locusts, such as rice, tobacco, sugar, copra, and coffee between the period, 1907 and 1908. Iloilo Governor Ruperto Montinola suggested the importance of building an irrigation system to protect the vast farmlands from droughts (Bureau of Insular Affairs, 8th Annual Report, 1908). The province experienced dry spell which occurred between July and August 1907 that rice farmers delayed the planting of the crop (rice) by September.

Bureau of Public Works

The Bureau of Public Works was visible in the construction and repairs of infrastructures vital to economic revival of the Philippines during the early years of the American rule. These infrastructures built by the Bureau – paramount for the colonial government – were bridges, roads, public markets, railways, government administration buildings and hospitals, school houses, water systems, among others. Construction of these infrastructure projects required experts like engineers, architects, and thousands of construction skilled workers. In short, the Bureau generated employment opportunities for both Filipinos and Americans as it carried out its government funded construction projects.

During the height of food shortage and poverty level was on the rise during the early years of the American occupation, ordinary inhabitants became construction workers hired by the Provincial Boards and Bureau of Public Works. Construction and repairs of bridges, roads, and government buildings were funded by the Provincial Boards and the insular government. Compensation from their labor – though meager – somehow helped workers and their families endure material deprivation. Iloilo Governor Benito Lopez claimed that farmers in some areas of the province volunteered their services, while wealthy families gave cash donations and food ration for the completion of the infrastructure projects carried out by the Bureau of Public Works (Bureau of Insular Affairs, 6th Annual Report, Part 1906).

Despite the difficult situation bore by ordinary Filipinos during the period of poor agricultural production, and as commercial activities remained sluggish, willingness to extend their services to the provincial governments was visible. Secretary James F. Smith, who headed the Department of Public Instruction, reported that the school divisions of Western Visayas received donations in various forms from private individuals for the construction of school buildings in the said region. Below is a complete data provided by

Table 1: Donations for School Purposes in Western Visayas (in Philippine peso)

Division	Money	Land	Materials	Labor	Total
Capiz	3,500.00	2,000.00	4,000.00	3,000.00	12,500.00
Iloilo, Antique	N/A	2,000.00	2,500.00	2,863.00	7,363.00
Negros Occidental	520.00	1,800.00	1,800.00	360.00	4,480.00

Source: 6th Annual Report, Philippine Commission, 1905, Part 4, p. 379

People believed that infrastructures such as bridges, roads, public markets, including school buildings can precipitate vibrant economic exchanges. Roads and bridges would allow farmers transport their products to the public markets and other commercial centers. Normal operations of public schools in the provinces also generate employment opportunities for teachers and non-teaching personnel. Educated natives who held teaching educational background and skills in office work were hired in the public school system the Americans established. This improved the employment rate in the provinces which contributed to its gradual economic revival.

Ending the problem of food shortages to prevent the outbreak of famine, the role of the Bureau of Public Works was viewed by the provincial governments of Panay as urgent. Governor Angel Salazar of Antique linked the steady success of agriculture in his province to the construction of roads and bridges that connected the farms to the public markets and commercial shops (Bureau, 5th Annual Report, Exhibit A 1905). This view expressed by Salazar was also shared by the toiling farmers in the entire island of Panay. And this explained clearly, too, why the 2nd Philippine Commission utilized the services of the Bureau of Public Works in its campaign against food shortage and hunger.

Bureau of Health

Cholera epidemic which broke out in many parts of the country including the provinces of Panay in 1902 may have exacerbated the depressing socio-economic condition of the Philippines had the Bureau of Health failed in its implementation of public health measures against the said virulent disease. The 2nd Philippine Commission already anticipated the spread of deadly diseases in the country it occupied as American officials observed the presence of different diseases in the local communities such as smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, dysentery, leprosy, and cholera. The insular government obviously expected the possible outbreak in epidemic form as these diseases were undoubtedly pervasive in many parts of the country.

On July 1, 1901, the 2nd Philippine Commission passed a law known as Act 157 which officially created the Insular Board of Health. This was the period when food shortage was in its peak in the provinces of Capiz, Antique, and Iloilo. The colonial government tasked the Insular Board of Health as the lead agency in the supervision of public health interests in the Philippines including the implementation of programs aimed at preventing the spread of epidemic diseases (Division of Insular Affairs, 1901).

As expected, cholera epidemic broke out in March 1902 in the Philippine capital, Manila. It spread like wildfire which ravaged vulnerable population of Manila and its neighboring provinces. American officials identified the deadly disease as, Asiatic cholera. In its first wave of epidemic in Manila, cholera claimed 3,560 lives out of 4,664 cases. The epidemic eventually reached the three provinces of Panay between August and October 1902. The Philippine Commission recorded a total of death toll of 23,909 out of 33,382 infected patients in the entire island of Panay (Worcester 1909).

The Insular Board of Health, which later became the Bureau of Public Health, collaborated closely with the

provincial governments of Panay as it implemented immediate measures to diminish the impact of the epidemic. American health officials emphasized three important things in this campaign against cholera: a) mass vaccination, b) public sanitation, and c) residents must observe personal hygiene. Despite opposition from the people, health officials insisted that majority of the population in Panay must be vaccinated. Provincial health officials vigorously encouraged their residents to observe personal hygiene like washing their hands before meals, boil their drinking water, and dig new wells. Old wells used by the inhabitants where cholera was pervasive were viewed by municipal health officials as contaminated by a cholera-causing bacterium known as *vibrio cholerae*.

As inhabitants of the three provinces collectively worked for the production of sufficient supply of food and other provisions for their daily sustenance amid the height of food shortage, the island (Panay), particularly its northwestern part (Capiz & Aklan district) was badly hit by a powerful typhoon on June 2, 1903. The typhoon destroyed government buildings and houses leaving a big number of the population of the province of Capiz homeless, and damaged around seventeen thousand pounds of *palay* (uncooked rice) including other crops like corn and abaca (*Capiz Wrecked!*, 1903). Governor Vidal also mentioned in his official report that the said typhoon in June 2 that ravaged cultivated fields in the province of Capiz, also caused the deaths of numerous farm animals like *carabaos*, cattles, and goats (Bureau of Insular Affairs, 5th Annual Report 1904, p. 445). Such destructive weather disturbance that pounded the province of Capiz aggravated the existing miserable condition of the local population.

Fortunately, the Bureau of Health appeared successful in its campaign against cholera outbreak despite the June 2 typhoon which mitigated the unbearable situation experienced by the population. Capiz Governor Vidal wrote:

Health conditions at the beginning of the said year (1904 – *mine*) had greatly improved, the cholera having passed the period of greatest mortality notwithstanding the fact that it still claimed numerous victims, with 71 per cent of deaths among those attacked during the first months of the year (Vidal in Bureau of Insular Affairs, 5th Annual Report 1904, p. 437).

On matters concerning public sanitation – a basic requirement in preventing the spread of cholera – both provinces of Antique and Iloilo achieved a certain level of improvement as desired by the Bureau of Health. Governor Salazar claimed that the sanitary condition of most of the pueblos or towns of Antique was already satisfactory, and no outbreak of deadly diseases including cholera appeared between 1904 and 1905 (Bureau of Insular Affairs, 6th Annual Report, 1905). The provincial government of Iloilo also described the sanitary condition of the province as generally improved in its 1907 official report. Take note that cholera epidemic ended in Iloilo sometime in February 1906. The conclusion of the epidemic in Panay commenced the revival of the cultivation of farmlands, and highlighted the priority of the local farmers produce the food supplies needed by the whole population. This optimism was reflected in the statement of Iloilo Governor Benito Lopez in 1906:

. . . the introduction of variety of crops, the free distribution of seeds to farmers, and the sending of expert agriculturists by the government to the pueblos for the purpose of teaching modern practical methods of cultivation would ensure the progress of agriculture. (Lopez in Bureau of Insular Affairs, 7th Annual Report 1907 Part 1, p. 286)

Although there were incidents of cholera occurred in some provinces in the country, e.g. Bataan, Bohol, Cagayan, Ilocos Norte, Leyte, and Samar, to name a few, during the early months of 1910, none of the three provinces of Panay had reported cases of infection. The Bureau of Public Health, since 1910, had gradually improved its policies and measures in preventing outbreaks of dreadful diseases like cholera, smallpox, dysentery, leprosy, and malaria (Annual Reports, 1911). That was obviously beneficial for the public. A laboring population, particularly the tillers of farm lands, could work productively free from risk of

contracting serious ailments. That was exactly what the growing population of the provinces of Panay felt with a sigh of relief. Since 1902, increasing agricultural production was paramount for the inhabitants to ensure sufficient supply of food, and prevent hunger.

CONCLUSION

Incidents of hunger in the three provinces of Panay were observed between the period 1899 and 1902. Those were the critical years for the Filipinos as intervening factors influenced the material condition of the Visayan provinces such as the armed conflict, drought, and plaques which disrupted agricultural production. As a result, food supply diminished steadily which affected the vulnerable population dependent mainly on agriculture. Provincial governments of the said provinces shared the same sentiment that famine could ensue once the problem of food shortages would remain unabated.

Alarmed by the diminishing supply of food in Panay and other provinces in the country, the 2nd Philippine Commission enacted a law, Act No. 517. This law extended financial support, declared uncultivated lands open for agricultural ventures, and other resources to the provinces affected by food crisis, particularly in Panay island, aimed at increasing farm production. Furthermore, the 2nd Philippine Commission tasked its agencies such as the Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Works, and the Bureau of Public Health, to collaborate closely with the provincial governments of Panay as they carried out relevant projects that aided beleaguered communities survived from the food shortage.

The problem of food shortage in the provinces of Panay finally ended as farm villages cultivated more quick-growing crops like sweet potato, corn, and rice as encouraged by the Bureau of Agriculture. The three provinces also invested in other valuable products like tobacco, hemp, and sugarcane which were commercially profitable in many parts of the country. Such increased of agricultural productivity was accompanied by the development of vital infrastructures like roads, bridges, and public markets pursued by the Bureau of Public Works, while the Bureau of Health successfully ended cholera epidemic which alleviated the condition of the people. Famine was successfully averted.

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