

Thimuay Mbeng, Lund and Lommason, and the Christianization of the Lapuyan Subanens

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ABSTRACT

This work is about socio-cultural history that was shaped by religious conversion. It shows how three personalities became responsible for the Christianization, literacy, and modernization of the Subanens of Lapuyan in Zamboanga Peninsula. The chief welcomed the American Protestant missionaries in his territory; then the missionaries introduced to the natives Christianity through literacy and community works. Missionary works were later multiplied through native lay preachers. The initial reactions of the Subanens on the impending social change can be seen through their response (although passively) to the missionaries, how they interpret their dreams and how they view the foreigners according to their beliefs. The article is concluded by showing that the altruistic nature of missionary works is in fact in line with American colonial policy. This is evidenced in the words expressed by religious leaders and colonial authorities. Personal interviews, archival research, and review of related literatures were the methods used in gathering the data to form this study.

Keywords: socio-cultural history, Lapuyan Subanen, Protestant missionaries, lay preachers, Alliance

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subanens of Lapuyan in Zamboanga del Sur celebrated their 100th year of Christianity only in 2012. It was the result of three decades of labor by American Protestant missionaries on their forefathers. This was made possible because the chieftain, Thimuay Mbeng, welcomed them to his village. The first missionaries to visit were Rev. David Lund and his wife Hulda in 1912. They were replaced in 1914 by Rev. Samuel Lommason who was joined by his wife Elizabeth a year after. The Lommasons stayed for three decades with the Subanens, spreading the gospel, performing missionary works and introducing modern ways of living. In this way, Lapuyan was integrated into the mainstream of Philippine society, a factor why they did not experience being marginalized and oppressed during the present time. It is interesting to note that despite the presence of a Spanish fort overlooking Dumangkilas Bay in Margosatubig across Lapuyan, there was no record whatsoever of Spanish penetration in the latter. Hence, Lapuyan Subanen did not experience colonial control until the Americans came.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Historical methods employed in this study include site visits, oral interviews, and evaluation of facts gathered from it. Pertinent primary and secondary sources from individuals, libraries, and the Internet materials

were also gathered.

The writer was fortunate to meet individuals aged 80 to 92 years old who had personal encounters with Rev. Lund, Rev. Lommason and their wives, and the succeeding American missionaries. Data gathered from them are the most prized for this research. This is followed by a legal document, a personal letter, and several photographs bearing the signature of Lommason or that of his wife Ella. The house left behind by the Lommasons is still standing and habitable, although in a decrepit condition. Lapuyan is able to keep several pre-war and post-war photographs depicting church activities, Subanen traditions, and the town's old landscape. On the other hand, gathering data on the leadership and role of Thimuay Mbeng on the missionaries' entry did not become a problem since his descendants remain prominent locals in the town.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ancestral religion of the Subanens

Before Christianity was introduced to the Subanens of Lapuyan, they had already a complex set of belief system. They worshipped and feared various gods and spirits and there is a supreme god named *Diwata Megbabaya*. For instance, the rice has a spirit called *gimud* and the spirit of an ancestor is called *medlengaw*. They performed *degaan* (blood sacrifice) to appease these spirits. *Phemwas* (human sacrifice) was the highest form of the sacrifices. The offering altar is called *maligay*. During full moon they performed a ritual called *megayep*. In times of sickness the *gbelyan* (priest) performed a dance worship for the spirits in a swinging platform called *shelayan*.

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They relied on a *memulong* (herbalist) for wellness and healing. With the aid of medicine concocted from various plants, the Subanens also practiced abortion and birth control, and created *saled* (poison), *kalimo* (love potions) and the like. The grandest community feast is the *gbeklug*, which can last for several weeks of drinking and eating, but central to the event is the elevated platform where the people take turns dancing. It has three types: *gbeklug pelento* (feast for a dead chief); *gbeklug manganawa* (healing of the sick), and *gbeklug denion* (feast for the final burial of the dead). The wedding ritual (*gblae*) was held at the break of dawn. Subanen practiced plural marriages, both polygyny (man with many wives) and polyandry (woman with more than one husband). Incestuous marriage was also permitted after a fine called *bitiyala* was paid and after a certain ritual was performed to prevent *thepo* (curse).

With the arrival of the missionaries who introduced Christianity and Western norms through public education, abovementioned beliefs and practices that could not be reconciled with Christian principles and Philippine laws were discouraged and eventually abolished. Some survived by means of modifications. While others, like the *gbeklug*, the holding by which entails high expenses, can only be held in government-sponsored cultural showcase.

Early American visitors

Before the Lunds and the Lommassons, the locality was already visited by the governor of the Moro Province, General Leonard Wood, in 1904. He conferred with Thimuay Mbeng in Shung Lupa to convince the latter to cooperate with the American government. With the establishment of the Moro Province, Mbeng and other Subanen chieftains and Muslim *datus* in the peninsula were appointed as Deputy Headman of the Moro Province.

In 1905, Lapuyan was also visited by the ethnologist Emerson Brewer Christie. For three days, he was welcomed by Thimuay Mbeng in his house in Pam-pang. Mbeng also invited chiefs from neighboring places to confer to take advantage of the presence of Christie:

On arrival at Margosatubig, the principal Subano chief of the region was found to be at the fort, and I accompanied him on the same day to his rancheria across the bay. Three days were spent at his house. The host invited in a number of chiefs from the surrounding country, and they responded cordially, one or two of them being from the Lake Wood region.

The statement of Christie regarding the kind of

house Thimuay Mbeng had, showed evidence of the latter's affluence and his close ties with the American authorities:

...at Pang-pang, in Dumankilas Bay, Timuai Imbing, have (sic) taken the advice of the American authorities to build a permanent house near the shore, has a dwelling supported by great beams of hardwood...

The entry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) in Dumangkilas region can be traced back to the presence of American loggers and businessmen in the area. Originally, the task was to evangelize in Margosatubig, but realizing that the area was already dominated by *Bisaya* and *Chavacano*, they moved to other places for the mission.



Image 1 – Thimuay Mbeng (born: ca. 1840s – died: 1921)

The 'prophecies'

The municipality of Lapuyan today still holds the tradition of tracing the Christian conversion of their forefathers to the prophecies of the *gbelyans* (priests). It is said that a *gbelyan* from Timasek named Mentuhan was given a message in a *megayep* (religious worship under the moonlight). The following is the story told by Mangandiong Lusay, grandnephew of Mentuhan to Eunice Irwin:

The year was 1912. Timasek was peaceful. Mentuhan, a gbelyan, gathered his brothers and sisters and prophesied that a white man would come with the news of the true God. He heard that from a spirit in megayep while he was in a trance...The white man would raise his hand, and they would follow by bowing their heads. Mentuhan then burned all the items of worship, asking his brothers and sisters to burn their items too. He was standing in the middle of the pile and the equipment was all around him. When the fire was high, he jumped out safely...

His brother Lusay burned everything. After two years,

the Lommassons arrived. It was 1914. Timasek was the second place visited by Lommasson. Mentuhan died before they arrived, but Lusay was still alive. Apo Lusay was converted and burned all the remaining objects—amulets, inherited objects, etc. A church was built in Timasek at the time of Lusay who was then the Datu Sapalao.

Another *gbelyan* named Gumen said that after his death, the people would see a new religion. Likewise, Khalay, the *gbelyan* son of Thimuay Imbing had said that “*the time is coming when people would bow their heads and there would be no more drumming.*” A *gbelyan* from another place has said that the message was revealed to him in a dream and when he confided it to another *gbelyan*, it was found that the latter had the same dream. With or without the said predictions, there was already an awareness at least among some in the community that an inevitable change would come. The increasing presence of Americans in neighboring areas gave them the natural inkling that one day, the foreigners would also enter their territory. It is to be noted that prominent families among them who were able to go out mainly for commercial activities had already acquaintances with American authorities, businessmen, and missionaries. It is not even surprising that the said prophecy of Mentuhan in 1912 came true in 1914, because as early as 1904, Pampang, the coastal part of Lapuyan was already visited by the Americans. The year 1912 was also the same year that Rev. David Lund arrived in Margosatubig and proceeded to Pampang.

Rev. Lund and the early Subanen lay preachers

According to Priscilla Imbing-Ebillo, granddaughter of Thimuay Mbeng, it is possible that through commercial exchanges in Margosatubig and all over the Zamboanga peninsula and Cotabato that the *Thimuay* first met the American missionaries. It was because of commerce that he was able to communicate in Tausug, Maguindanao, Yakan, and Sama languages. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) arrived in the Philippines in 1902 and created their base in the town of Zamboanga. Rev. David O. Lund, of Swedish heritage and Lutheran background, and his wife Hulda arrived in Margosatubig and Shung Lupa in 1912. Fluent in Spanish, it was easier for Lund and Lommasson to establish rapport with the local *Chavacano*-speaking population in Margosatubig.

The *Chavacano* companions of the Lunds who knew Sama communicated with Thimuay Mbeng through Sama. But aside from him, the most known interpreter and guide for the mission in Pampang was his own daughter, Diom, who also knew the language.

Since then, the earliest known lay workers from Lapuyan were Diom Imbing, Lumuhon Banghulot, and Piyay Bunghawan. They were followed by Lumbia Bayamban, Pened Dawang, Canda Humpa, Julian Kehk, Tehok Bunghawan, Maumin Lagahan, Leopoldo Lusay, and others.

Initial reactions to Christian conversion

Whenever Rev. and Mrs. Lund went to the interior of Lapuyan, the Subanens ran or hid. An anecdote about the conversion experience of Lumbia Bayamban was told to the author by his son, Sacheuz Bayamban: Lumbia was about six years old when the Lunds came to Pampang. Adults warned the children not to let the white couple touch their forehead or else they would be eaten by the *keruhus*. Mrs. Hulda Lund was believed by the Subanens to be a *keruhus* because of the enormous size of her body. Unfortunately for Lumbia, Rev. Lund was able to lay his hand on the child's forehead while the boy was trying desperately to hide under a table. The child secretly kept the fear to himself and waited for the day that the monster would appear to devour him, which never happened. By the time he came of age, he decided to be a lay preacher.

Rev. and Mrs. Lommasson

Samuel DeWitt Lommasson, a half-Apache Indian from Topeka, Kansas had initial acquaintance with Subanens at Margosatubig while serving the American troops for almost three years. After he was discharged from the army in 1913, he joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). In 1914, Lommasson arrived at Sung Lupa as a resident missionary and was cordially received by Thimuay Mbeng. He stayed at the house of the Thimuay for several months until a separate house could be provided for him. As Mrs. Lund described Lommasson's reception:

The chief has given up his house for the missionary's use for the present. We wish it were possible to give our friends a faint idea of the joy of the dear old chief when he realized that we had brought Brother Lommasson there to stay. He also promised Mr. Lund and the writer all the rice we could eat if we would stay. We explained we had much work at home, and must return, but that we could come to see them at a later time, and that he might come down to Zamboanga with Brother Lommasson later to visit us. This pleased him immensely.

The following year, Rev. Lommasson was joined by his wife Elizabeth Herkert. Ella, of German descent, was born in Germany but was raised in Brooklyn, New York. The Lommassons easily gained the acceptance

of the Subanens.

The first important achievement of the CMA in its work throughout different parts of Zamboanga Province was the establishment of schools. Following the pattern of Hulda Lund in the town of Zamboanga, Elizabeth Lommasson also began a children's school in Lapuyan. The children gathered at their house in Pampang and Mrs. Lommasson taught reading and other elementary subjects and some Christian instructions through a picture roll of Bible characters. At first, the locals were suspicious of the process, and many observed at a distance for many days before joining. The school was successful because of the support of Thimuay Mbeng, who sent his youngest child Purok. By 1917, a Sunday school was introduced by the Lommassons in Pampang which had an attendance of 45 people.

The first church building was erected in Pampang in 1919 and enlarged in 1926 through donations from the son of Thimuay Mbeng, Datu Purok. But through time, Pampang was deserted with the gradual movement of the people to the present-day town site. Hence, in 1935, The Tabernacle (church building) was built in a location accessible to the two rivers, the Lapuyan and Khenun, for easier baptismal rites.



Image 2 - Samuel & Elizabeth Lommasson, ca. 1930s

The Lommassons in community education

The couple taught the Subanens the value of land ownership. Lommasson acted for Thimuay Mbeng on behalf of the community to register the lands of Lapuyan. This provided protection against landgrabbers and allowed them to continue to enjoy the toils of their land to this day. Around year 1913 to 1914, surveyors from Zamboanga were sent to Lapuyan for the task. As one of the American policies, Lommasson discouraged among the natives the traditional practice of *kaingin*.

Coconuts were planted in an efficient way by requiring every male preparing for marriage to plant 100 seedlings. Lommasson also introduced other cash crops. To this day, coconut remains an important agricultural product of the town. He initiated direct markets in Zamboanga to enable the Subanen to receive fair prices for their goods. A simple store was started by him and later turned over to a Chinese businessman when he became busier with missionary work.

On the other hand, the task of Mrs. Lommasson was to attend to the physical and medical needs of the natives. Years later, when the residence of the couple was already in Lapuyan, the ground floor of their house was used as a dispensary, and medicines were sometimes given *gratis*. The upper floor of the house served as their residence where meetings were held and important visitors, Subanens or Moros alike, were welcomed. She also taught dressmaking, crocheting, and embroidery to women as well as nutrition to nursing mothers, personal hygiene, and sanitation. She at once helped eliminate the amoeba outbreak in the locality. The wife of Datu Purok, Puya Manghay, for instance, gave birth to all her children assisted by Ella Lommasson. The labor of the Lommassons paused only every after 10 years of furlough during which they could visit their home country.

Training native preachers

The Christian and Missionary Alliance slowly gained ground in the southern Philippines. Pastors were very scarce and limited, and with the establishment of the Ebenezer Bible Institute (EBI) in the town of Zamboanga, the desperately needed numbers were trained. The fields of ministry were concentrated in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu, Lapuyan, and Cotabato City.

In Lapuyan, the Lommassons developed a pattern of training lay preachers. In it, capable natives gathered at the school on Saturdays, and then went to distant villages on Sundays. The Tabernacle (church building) was the home base of all evangelistic activities in the interior part. The Christianization of Lapuyan was largely brought about by the work of these lay preachers in the early years that established preaching points and churches. This was an effective means to reach the entire Subanen population through people who were effective communicators of the message. In this way, the efforts of missionaries were multiplied.

Although the first six years of the couple's mission in Lapuyan was "fruitless" (no baptism), by 1941 there were 52 churches of Subanen faithfuls. In the words of Dr. Rambo:

Such was the beginning of the wide-scale use of lay preachers, which has characterized the Alliance mission until the present. It is difficult to withhold the judgment that this flexibility in regard to the use of lay preachers contributed largely to the growth of the Subanu work, as well as in the other areas of the field... The combination of an unpaid lay clergy, and a virile faith enabled the churches to become self-supporting from the start. The pattern for church expansion was for one congregation serving a larger geographical area to "hive off" as Rev. Lommasson (in his unpublished memoirs) called it and form smaller congregations. All the while, people in increasingly remote areas continued to call for someone to teach them about Christianity. Innovations were following social lines, and people were becoming Christians without serious social dislocation. This pattern continued until the beginning of WW II, by which fifty-two churches were established.

CMA workers from Zamboanga had occasional visits to its mission fields. In one of these visits, the unforgettable tragedy of 1928 to the first Alliance mission boat, the *Las Buenas Nuevos* (The Good News), occurred. On board were Rev. Loptson, Rev. George Strohm, Miss Holsted, Miss Christensen, and Miss Baladjay. They were scheduled to stop at Olutanga before proceeding to Lapuyan and finally to Cotabato. They spent the first night at Olutanga and before leaving for Lapuyan, an accidental explosion of the fuel tank claimed the lives of Miss Christensen and Miss Baladjay who at the time of the incident were cooking breakfast.

Another instance of Lapuyan visit was that by the students at Ebenezer Bible Institute in 1930. It was the policy of the school that during vacation months, the young people would be sent out for evangelistic outreach. The trip was scheduled for Lapuyan by a tiny, motorized boat via Sibugay Bay. Rev. Florentino de Jesus Sr., who later became the second President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines (CAMACOP) from 1957 to 1960 was one of those young students. Recalling the trip ordeal, he wrote:

I was so sick that I did not care if the boat were to sink. But oh, how we praised God when at last we set foot on solid ground at Pang-Pang where the Lapuyan Church was originally located. Limbuan Tuklos and Mamayong Tigum were members of the evangelistic party with the Lapuyan young people. A happy crowd welcomed the group. Among them were Rev. and Mrs. Lommasson, Datu Purok, Piyay Bughawan, Bo-ok, and some people from the Imbing-Sia clan. On their Sunday ministry, we were

assigned to join the different lay preachers in their respective points of ministry. We were so inspired by the positive attitude and joyous spirit of our companions that we hiked a great distance without feeling weary.

The 1930s and 1940s were considered the period of rapid expansion of Alliance in Lapuyan. A camp site was developed on the steep banks of the Lapuyan River where tiers of benches were carved out of the embankment forming an amphitheater with a seating capacity of one thousand. Here, conferences and evangelical meetings were held and became a center of the now-legendary "moonlight meetings," where people from the outlying areas would wend their way during the full moon for services of songs and preaching. In the mid-1930s, Agustin Zapanta and Atitang Imbing, both natives of Lapuyan and graduates of Ebenezer in 1934 and 1936, respectively, were the known Church leaders during this period.



Image 3 - Tabernacle Church in Pampang, 1927. In the picture are the Lapuyan Subanens, Samuel, and Ella Lommasson, American and non-Subanen missionaries and visitors.

Missionaries' ordeal during the Japanese Occupation

During the war years, the whereabouts of Rev. and Mrs. Lommasson were unknown to their fellow missionaries, who, however, correctly assumed that they chose to remain in Lapuyan. The rest of the Alliance missionaries in Zamboanga such as the families of Mr. and Mrs. R.R. Hess, Mr. and Mrs. Landis, Mr. and Mrs. Loptson, Mr. Ralph Bressler, Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Davis were captured, and brought to Manila, to the concentration camp at the University of Santo Tomas, Old Bilibid and New Bilibid prisons. There they suffered privations, malnutrition, and tuberculosis. The Alliance Weekly issue on April 7, 1945 published an excerpt of the letter report of Chaplain Capt. Harry W. Webster regarding the situation of the missionaries assigned in the country:

There is one missionary couple in the Philippines that I did not see: Mr. and Mrs. S.D. Lommasson. I understand they are still in the Margosatubig, (sic) and have never been interned.

Living became more rigorous as the days wore on. Food became such a desperate problem that Lommasson testified to a diet that included snake steaks, fried lizards, and monkey stew, all prepared on a stove of three rocks. Amidst desperation, Lommasson once wrote that he felt the Subanen were not ready to use their religion in times of war. In his words:

As I went about among the people, I met several of our pastors. They were all confused and did not know what to do. When talking to the head of the community – a government-appointed man – he said, ‘Oh, religion is all right in peace time, but this is no time for it.’ Perhaps not for his kind, but I knew it was just the time for my religion...

Once, Lommasson saw through his telescope Japanese vessels being towed into the harbor of Malangas, a town across the bay from Lapuyan. But later that evening, the sound of Subanen gongs were heard ringing in the night, signifying a Japanese attack in the village.

The lives of the missionaries were in danger. The military experience of Rev. Lommasson somehow helped them survive. They dug foxholes and slept in different places every night. With the help of Thimuay Mbeng’s son Datu Lumok Imbing, it took three and a half years for the Lommassons to hide at different locations in the interiors of Mahalingeb, Peluhoban, and Dega. Lumbia Bayamban, one of the pioneering lay ministers, and his son Sacheuz kept and fed the missionaries in the family’s land in Mahalingeb where there was a good view of approaching enemies from Dumangkilas Bay and Tاملان Island. There were two American businessmen who hid with the couple - Mr. Wilson, owner of the Zamboanga City Ice Plant, and Mr. Redding, owner of the Buenavista Estate Plantation in Zamboanga City. It is worth noting that the children of Khalay Imbing (Thimuay Mbeng’s eldest child), particularly Lantay and Atitang, also took an active part in hiding the missionaries. Atitang initiated putting a 24-hour volunteer guard at possible enemy entrances. It was inside the mountains of Gelyan where she and her husband, Mahalambas Huminis, were married by Rev. Lommasson.

Messages were sent to Khalay to surrender the four Americans. He was warned that if he would continue giving refuge to them, he would be “skinned to death,” to which he gallantly replied that he was will-

ing if this was the price for defiance that he must pay. At one time the Japanese troops advanced to Lapuyan and captured some residents, including Khalay’s son Lantay and his nephew Hilario Gonzales. Fortunately, they were able to escape.

The first definite signs of approaching liberation were the American planes flying overhead and droppings of leaflets that said the Americans were taking Zamboanga. On May 2, 1945, planes were seen flying low over Malangas. The following week, three planes and two torpedo boats came to bomb and shell the town. A week later, heavier bombs were dropped, and the Japanese fled to the hills. Later, a strange vessel was seen entering Lapuyan River to fetch the Americans. The Lommassons were returned to America, where they retired and died in the 1960s.

The birth of CAMACOP

After World War II, the Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines (CAMACOP) was established in February 1947 after Rev. Ralph E. Bressler gathered all the local workers for the first ever National Workers Conference on February 7-9, 1947. This means that the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) had to establish its local church in the country. This time, the missionaries were focused on the church growth of CAMACOP.

Meanwhile, the repatriation of the Lommassons was not the end of the missionary days in Lapuyan. The last American missionary residents were Rev. Thomas Jones and his wife Doris Erickson from Minnesota. Lapuyan produced lay ministers who were sent to other Subanen regions. In 1949, Mr. Gulbranson sent Lumbia Bayamban and Leopoldo Lusay to pioneer evangelization of the Subanen in Tuboy, Zamboanga del Norte. When the two reached the area, the people had never been touched by outside influences before. They went around in their traditional clothes while children were naked, and adults blackened their teeth. This group had a long-standing prophecy of the coming of a white-teethed god. Bayamban later proceeded to Katipunan and Dabiak.

The post-war years that followed were fruitful for the CAMACOP. The moonlight meetings of pre-war days now included the training of lay preachers and Sunday school teachers. People from the interiors congregated to Lapuyan for feasting, daytime instruction in Bible, and evangelistic services in the evening that frequently continued until the early morning hours.

Another significant event in the training of pastoral leadership was the establishment in 1967 of the Tribal Bible School (TBS) in Marwing, a barrio of Lapuyan. This school was founded by Filipino district

leaders headed by Rev. and Mrs. Eusebio Pescador for the purpose of providing better-trained pastors for Subanen congregations.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Missionaries and Educators in American Policy

American Protestant missionaries were, after all, patriotic citizens of their country. This is illustrated in the words of Dr. A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance regarding Spanish-American War:

It is a war in which the providence of God seems destined to have important place in the fulfillment of prophecy, inasmuch as it is to be, we trust, God's instrumentality for striking another blow at that system of iniquity and papacy.

While fighting between Filipinos and Americans continued, Simpson was already making plans to enter the Philippines:

The Philippine islands are calling to us. The war has, of course, been a cause of delay and hindrance in the immediate starting of missions in Luzon, but it is hoped that before the close of the year, the vigorous operations of American forces, aided by the cool season will bring about a settled peace and a stable government.

It also appeared that the works of the missionaries that went beyond religious propagation was not accidental. The three decades of conciliatory and humanitarian work of the Lommassons was still in accordance with American government's policy of integration. According to T. Valentino Sitoy:

For it is also to be remembered that the Protestant missionaries were in integral part of the total American presence in the Philippines, and despite the remarkable independence of thought that some of them exhibited, nevertheless their perception and consequently their labors cannot be entirely divorced from the main characteristics of that American presence.

Therefore, missionaries also served as agents in the pacification of the Filipinos by American colonial government. Literacy proved an effective means by which the natives were socially, culturally, economically, and politically integrated into Philippine society in general and also as full participating citizens in the democratic processes of government in particular. As

mentioned by Teodoro Agoncillo:

*In Mindanao area, the work of pacification was also undertaken by American laymen, entrepreneurs, and teachers, particularly during the period of the Moro Province from 1903 to 1906. The **Lunds and Lommassons** in the Subanen country of Zamboanga opened the socio-economic potentials of the area. **Coconuts were introduced in Lapuyan and other areas to improve agricultural income.***

In assessing the impact of Protestant missionaries upon the Filipinos, Camilo Osias commented:

*It is certainly true that the work of the **missionaries in the field of religion and the teachers in the field of education was more effective in pacifying the Filipinos** and in winning their faith and confidence than the forces of American arms.*

The influence of the American teachers on public schools might best be summarized in a speech by Gen. Pershing:

Although it is well understood that Christianity as a religion is not mentioned in the school, yet it is lived by the Christian Filipinos and American teachers and it may, in some measure, influence the lives of these young girls.

In the above speech, Gen. Pershing was referring to the American Protestant efforts to educate Moro girls in Cotabato. The thought, however, can be equally applied to the efforts of the Protestant mission in Lapuyan.

As part of American colonial policy, what specific role was played by the imposition of English as a language of instruction inside the public schools? President William McKinley was quoted to have said:

"In view of the great number of languages spoken by the different tribes, it is especially important to the prosperity of the islands that common medium of communication be established, and it is obviously desirable that this medium should be English language. Special attention should be at once given affording full opportunity to all the people of the islands to acquire the use of English language."

The Annual Report of the Philippine Commission in 1914 added more specific reasons why English was the medium of instruction. As stated in the report:

"Among the most important reasons for making English the language of instruction are the following: (1)

Linguistic unity is the most important step toward national unity; (2) English means contact with ideals compatible with democratic government; (3) English is the commercial language of the world, especially of the Far East."

Lapuyan after the American missionaries

The American Protestant mission of almost half a century among the Subanens of Lapuyan brought a significant social and historical change in the municipality. Up to the late 1990s, the town was dubbed as "little America" since 'broken' English served as a secondary language to communicate with non-Subanens. Up to this time, it is a "CAMACOP country" since eighty-five percent of the population in the municipality are CAMACOP. For instance, as of May 1991, there are six CAMACOP churches within the población and 40 churches distributed in all barangays.

On the other hand, at present, unlike Christian-dominated towns in other parts of the Philippines, the Immaculate Concepcion Church in Lapuyan remained in a quasi-parish status due to the small number of Catholics. Holy mass is held only twice a month by visiting priests from Margosatubig. There were situations when the Catholics had to invite a CAMACOP pastor for their homily in the absence of a priest. Roman Catholicism was brought to Lapuyan by migrant settlers whose number remains minimal.

The religion and literacy brought by the American missionaries to Lapuyan proved to have a positive impact. Although it cannot be denied that embracing a foreign religion, language, and way of life entails death to other aspects of the culture.

Towards the end of the 20th century, majority of the Lapuyan Subanens were Christianized, educated, and possessed titled lands. A considerable number of third generations since Thimuay Mbeng's period were professionals – educators, medical doctors, lawyers, doctors of theology, engineers, nurses, etc. who went to Silliman, Ateneo de Zamboanga, Ebenezer Bible College (Zamboanga City), and University of the Philippines. There was a feeling of superiority and pride when addressed as 'Subanen from Lapuyan'. This is in contrast with the experience of other indigenous groups who lived in poverty, dispossessed of ancestral lands and cower in front of non-natives. In the words of Rambo,

"Without this (American) influence, the economic plight of the Lapuyan Subanen might be similar to that of other tribes of the Philippines who have been intimidated into fleeing to remote mountain areas."

Lapuyan therefore, is a paradox. She used the outside influences she once embraced to preserve and protect her Subanen identity. Because of this unique socio-cultural experience, she became an important subject of study by different fields – history, linguistics, musicology, literature, ethnography, religion, medicine, and agronomy. However, studies are lacking for other areas touched by the Alliance mission. These are in some parts of Zamboanga Peninsula, Basilan, Sulu, and Cotabato City. Hence, it is also important to investigate the impact of the CMA mission and American policy on these and to find out why only Lapuyan emerged to be known as "Little America" in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

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