
THE BATTLE OF BAYANG

Federico V. Magdalena

While the Philippine-American war brewed in the Philippines' north, Mindanao and Sulu were deceptively quiet when the American troops set foot on the islands in 1899. The first taste of war between the "Moros" and the "white men" came two years after the occupation in what is known as the Battle of Bayang of 1902. Thereupon, an obdurate resistance was to grow for the next dozen years until the end of the American military regime in 1913, because the Moros realized that the Americans drove the Spaniards away, only to take their place. The events that would unfold dramatized another case of the "Indian wars" which the Americans fought in Mindanao. To the Moro warriors, however, it was a continuation of the holy war (*jihad*) which they had waged against foreigners.

As the Americans penetrated the interior, General Davis issued an order on March 4, 1902 (Bureau of Insular Affairs [BIA] File No. 5075-5; also "General Davis' Order," *Washington Evening Star*, April 22, 1902, BIA 5075-3) enjoining the troops to "observe the greatest prudence during explorations and operations in the territory occupied by non-Christian tribes." He also directed the officers who were brought in direct contact with the natives to treat them with kindness, not to molest the peaceful, and not to interfere with their religious practices or in the observance of their tribal customs. He offered to buy their native ponies and employ such laborers as the army may need. But above all, he impressed upon the Moros the fact that the taking and selling of slaves was forbidden.

As if testing the American limits, the Moros, on the same month, attacked a detachment of cavalry under Lt. Forsyth sent out by authority of General Davis to open up the trail from Parang-Parang (Cotabato) to Lake Lanao. In that skirmish one cavalryman died on the first volley of fire; the Moros lost five killed and three

wounded, all identified to be followers of the Sultan of Bayang. While the Americans were retreating to Buldon, 18 of their horses were lost and, by any indication, taken by the pursuing Moros. Already irritated by previous acts of the Moros, such as theft of government property (e.g., four cows of Capt. Hagadorn in Malabang were "stolen" by the same group and "had a great feast eating them," in Hagadorn to Adjutant General, Aug. 1, 1901, Box 317, Pershing Papers), this event would precipitate a great battle. Earlier, Captain Hagadorn had reported several cases at Malabang and vicinity of petty disturbances: (a) a Maranao woman was snatched and sold by Jolo Moros, plus similar incidents at remote points; (b) nine slaves escaped from their masters and came to the Americans for assistance; (c) two rival Moro factions had a fight in the market; (d) a Moro thief was beheaded by his datu, and (e) Bayang Moros stole four of the government's cows and "had a great feast eating them." The last was critical because it helped add fire to the conflagration, which shall be discussed shortly. In Hagadorn's prophetic estimate, this act "bordered on warfare...when their depredations extend to killing one or more of our soldiers. I would believe in sending a force to Bayan (Bayang) to take the rancheria and hold it" (Hagadorn to Adjutant General, August 1, 1901, Box 317, Pershing Papers).

Then, before the month (March) had ended, two other soldiers were hacked to death. "This was a wanton assassination and to permit a thing of this kind to go unredressed, no one can tell the number of like occurrences that may befall our soldiers in that section," General Adna Chaffee wrote General Corbin on April 30, 1902 (Box 1, Corbin Papers). Earlier, a cable had been sent to Chaffee by the Adjutant General to the effect that "the President is anxious that no expedition be made against Moros until all efforts by negotiation have been exhausted" ("General Chaffee's Orders," *Washington Evening Star*, April 23, 1902, BIA 5075-3). Corbin responded to this report with a long dispatch, stating, among other things, that "to withdraw all our forces will ruin our prestige; to withdraw part of force will be dangerous."

Meanwhile, on April 13, 1902 Chaffee wrote the concerned datus (Sultan of Bayang, Datu Acta of Paigoay, and Amai Tampugao of Tubaran), asking them to deliver the "assassins" and "make restitution of the Government property which has been stolen by their followers" within two weeks. The message was carried by Sherif Mohammed Afdal, an Afghan high priest from Rio Grande, to

persuade the recalcitrant datus to yield to the demands of the Americans (Davis, in *Report of the War Department*, 1902: IX, p. 485). He was to explain to them how pleasantly the Maguindanao of the Pulangui valley got along with the soldiers, that the Americans had always been just towards the Moros, but "required them to be good on their part." But the datus were "insolent and stated that they would not give up their men and if we came there they would fight us." For one, the Sultan wrote back to the Brigade Commander saying that he recognized nobody but the Sultan of Turkey (Chaffee to Corbin, April 30, 1902, Box 1, Corbin Papers):

The word of the Colonel (Baldwin) is not the law of the Sultan of Bayan (Bayang); if the Colonel is a person under the Sultan of Stamboul, he will not change the laws or types of one another.

Meanwhile, war preparations began. Colonel Frank Baldwin¹ was authorized to mobilize 1,800 men in a punitive expedition and moved his forces from Parang-Parang to Malabang camp. He then pushed an advance from Malabang eight miles out to continue clearing the trail toward the lake. Part of the column was a battalion led by Major Scott of the 27th Infantry, which reached Lake Dapao without opposition but found the trail badly obstructed by fallen timber. Another battalion with a battery, headed by Captain Moore, was fired upon from the hills. Baldwin arrived there with three infantry battalions and the rest of the battery to reinforce the beleaguered troops. Their mountain guns pounded at close distance and drove off the enemies, leaving seven Moro dead bodies and no casualty to the Americans (General Chaffee's Orders, April 23, 1902, BIA 5075-3). Baldwin easily destroyed the smaller cottas of Pualas and Ganassi as soon as his troops moved out from Malabang. In those fights, the Sultan of Pualas was among the dead Moros (Baldwin, in *Report of the War Department*, 1902).

Two weeks elapsed. On May 1, an ultimatum was sent to the Bayang datus to give up the murderers in 24 hours, or else "the consequences would be bad for the Moros" (Davis, 1902: 488). Baldwin positioned his forces around the cotta (fortification) of Pandapatan where the Bayang warriors and their allies from nearby Binidayan, 975 yards away, had grouped for defense (see map, Figure 1). (On their way to Pandapatan, the troops had shelled and destroyed the Binidayan cotta.) Fort Pandapatan, or Padang Karbala to the Maranao Moros, was reputed to be one of the strongest cottas in the

area.² With red flags flying in defiance, the fort was defended by a combined force of some 600 Moro warriors, mostly from Bayang, with some delegations of fighters from Bacolod, Butig, Paigoay, Maciu and Dirimuyud.

The contenders seesawed unevenly at a ratio of six to 10 in favor of the Americans who deployed 800 infantry, 225 dismounted cavalry, with four mountain guns and 80 pack mules of supplies. In addition, the latter had a back-up force of two battalions which stood by at Malabang for the succor at any moment's notice. Then, the countdown came to an end.

On May 2, at about 1:30 and 2:00 p.m. the mountain batteries roared and did most of the offensive. After the shelling of Fort Pandapatan, the troops surrounded the *cotta* and showered it with rapid fire that kept down the Moro shots. The night intervened with heavy rain and the Americans prepared themselves to scale the high walls of the fort in a final assault the following day. Before daybreak, however, white flags were hoisted by the Moros. The troops counted their casualties to be one officer dead, including nine enlisted men, with three officers and 37 enlisted men wounded. Three of the wounded eventually died within a few days. On the Moro side, the casualties were severe, with as much as "300 to 400 dead" according to surviving Moros. Among the slain were the Sultan of Bayang and his Raja Muda. Eighty-three of the Moro warriors surrendered, but shortly made a dash for liberty (Baldwin, in *RWD*, 1902).

When the tidings of the battle reached Washington, the troops received profuse commendations from their superiors. President Roosevelt wired Chaffee "for the splendid courage and fidelity which have again carried our flag to victory" (Davis, in *RWD*, 1902:IX, 490). Satisfied, the action paid off, says Gen. Chaffee, as "it secures respect for the United States authority in the center of Moro savagery" (*Outlook*, 1902: Vol. 54, 98). Reacting to the battle, however, Jacob Schurman (19202:1105), President of Cornell University and first head of the Philippine Commission, criticized the action of the military that they "might be guilty of the original provocation which ended in murderous retaliation."

With the fatuous war that it was, the Battle of Bayang meant the opening of the Lake Lanao area for global trade and absorption

into a western system. The centuries of insularity of the Maranaos, as the lake dwellers were also called, was broken for good. For the Americans who gained ground, there was no other way but deeper into the heart of this frontier: "It would make an awful mistake to withdraw therefrom" (Chaffee to Corbin, May 27, 1902, Box 1, Corbin Papers). But the deadly encounter of the *kris* and the krag had just begun. More would come during the year until the first half of 1903, when young Captain Pershing worked his way to the lake from Iligan to relieve Baldwin who earned a star as Brigadier General and was reassigned elsewhere. He took command of newly built Camp Vicars (named after Lt. Thomas Vicars who died in the Bayang affair), half a mile south of Bayang, where several campaigns were launched in the next twelve months.

NOTES

1. John J. Pershing describes him as a "fine soldier, with large experience in handling Indians, but was disposed to use force instead of diplomacy" (Unpublished Memoirs, Box 374, Pershing Papers).

2. This fort was estimated to be over 100 years old (Chaffee to Corbin, May 27, 1902, Box 1, Corbin Papers): It was constructed mainly of sod, faced with rock on the outside on two sides. The interior was about 80 feet square, with various holes around the walls for serving the lantacas (brass cannons) which were laid on the ground. The exterior side of the fort was completely hidden by live bamboos so thick that a field mouse could hardly get through it. Outside of the walls about 12 feet from same was a large ditch probably 10 feet deep and 12 feet wide at the top, then a space of undisturbed ground about 10 feet wide. On this ground were driven split bamboos slanting outward very close together, perhaps six or eight inches apart and about three feet high.

References

Annual Reports of the War Department (RWD) for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1902, Vol. IC. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902. (Included in this volume are the reports of General George Davis and Col. Frank Baldwin, Appendix G and Appendix 10, respectively).

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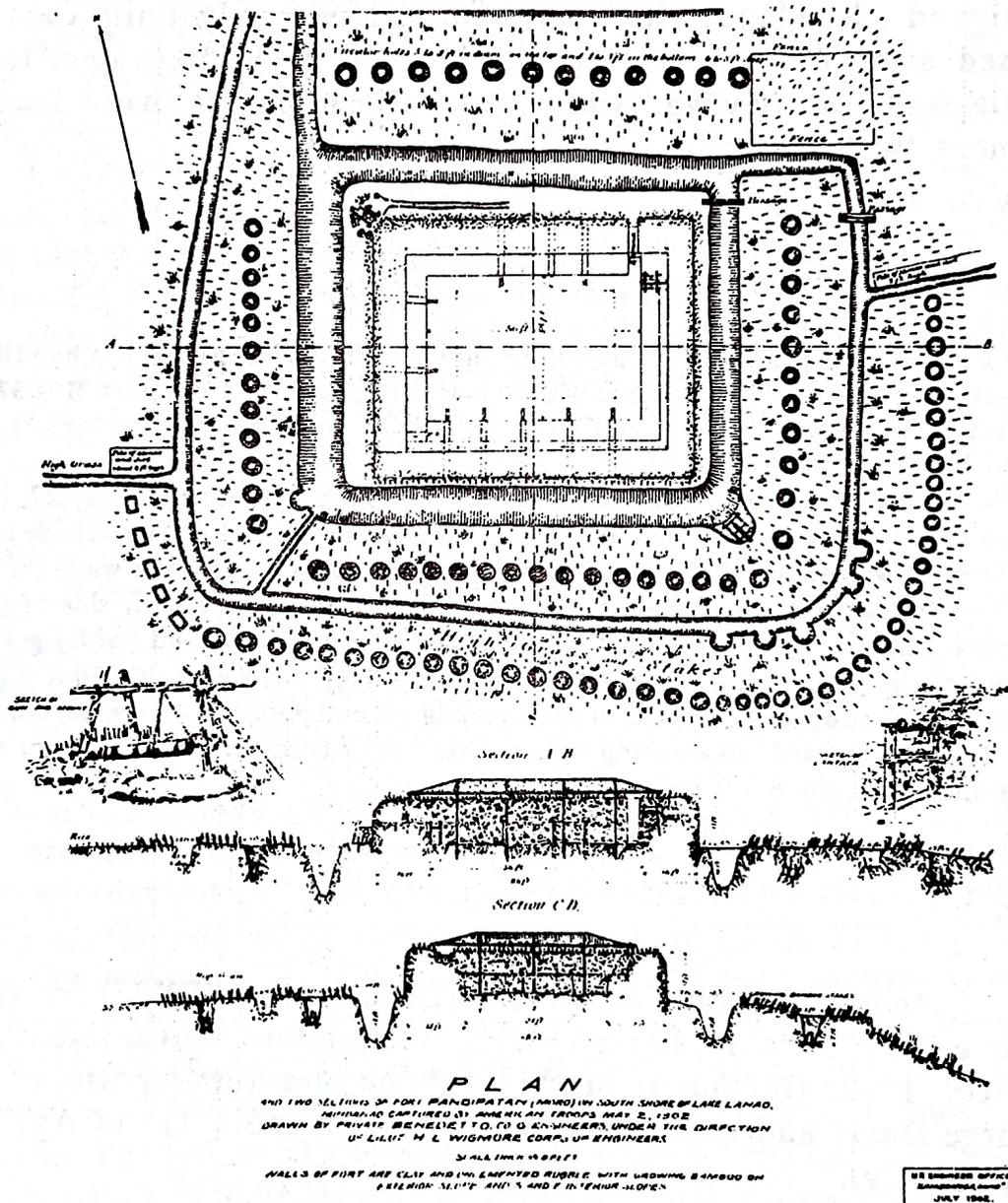


Figure 1 - Map of Fort Pandapatan (Drawn by Pvt. Benedetto, CO G Engineers, under the the direction of Lt. H. L. Wigmore).