

LAKAY CAMPOS



PHOTO A. LAMMINEUR

by Rev. O. Desmet

He is man with great prestige among his people. His deeply lined face, showing that he is very old, gives credit to his assertions, his pronouncements in connection with the historical facts of his tribe, his statements and decisions in all matters of controversy regarding inheritance of lands and heirlooms, for Lakay Campos is the living archive, the living cadastral register of Mankayan.

"In the very long ago," so he tells, "no people lived here in this region which is now called Mankayan. No one had ever thought to put up his house in this inhospitable mountains, where thick jungle and an abundance of tall pine trees warded off all possible immigrants.

The nearest settlements were then the villages of Awa and Asin, parts of Buguias.

The people over there were skilled hunters. One day, after they had trailed a strong, old buck with enormous antlers, for four days, and had passed through Ubanga, and Loo, and Gubang (which is now Gina-wang) they reached Aban. They saw the deer quietly grazing in an open place of the forest and let loose

their dogs. The buck aware of the danger dashed toward the edge of the level ridge and . . . disappeared. They heard a rustling of bushes and a clash: it had fallen into a deep precipice. The dogs wildly running in circles, stopped their pursuit and barking excitedly called their masters. The hunters, when they arrived at the border of the precipice saw that there was no way down toward the buck, which lay there at the bottom, seemingly dead. They walked to the left over Casigugan and finely succeeded in reaching their game making a perilous descent where the slope was less abrupt. Amidst a multitude of stones of all sizes they found the buck. Soon they had gathered some dry pitchy branches and having arranged a fireplace with three stones placed in the form of dalikan they made a fire to roast the deer meat. The pitchy pine made a hot fire. And as they were holding the meat with improvised spits above the fire they noticed a thick black liquid oozing from the 'dalikan' stones. What's this?, they exclaimed, a bad omen! Bad luck! We will die!



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BAKET KINYA

But after their meal, they were no longer frightened and inspected the molten mass: it covered the ground about the fire place, and was hard again. They took a stone and hammered: it could be molded into shape. They made a small pot that would serve for cooking and brought it home with them.

Their strange discovery drove many others to the place, who all returned with lumps, great and small. From morning to night stones hammered and hammered, pots were made, dishes, tools, enough to replace all their wooden stuff. They went on getting lumps, melting them and hammering and when they had made quite a number of pots and dishes they decided to go down to the lowlands in order to barter them for jars, blankets, knives and what not.

They knocked at the door of the wealthy Spaniards. "It's copper", these exclaimed. "Where did you find the stones out of which you made these dishes."

They pointed towards the mountains saying something that sounded like 'mankayang', meaning to say that they got those lumps from the mountain ridge. And so the Spaniards called the place whence they came: Mankayan.

They made good business and returned with heavy loads to their villages. Soon they moved to Mankayan in great numbers and settled down there. Many Chinese came up and began to buy the copper, sending it to China.

The Spaniards, in the meantime decided to organize the working of the copper mine and to increase the production. One day a certain Don Miguel and Don Tomas arrived at Mankayan and called all the prominent men of the settlements there about for a meeting. "Let us be

friends", they said, "we bring you money, look, three full gantas, we bring you salt, all kinds of foodstuffs, and here these two carabaos are also for you. Now, come, sign this paper". So, the old men of the hunters signed away the copper mine.

But, the first effort to establish a mine was a failure, for the natives were unwilling to be bossed about by the Spaniards and would not work. Then Chinese laborers were called in for whom houses were built: they were given five Pesos as they arrived and were promised a salary of fifty centavos a day as well as their daily food. When the Spaniards, later on, cut the rations, the Chinese, in revolt threatened to kill the Spaniards. These in order to keep peace called in a platoon of soldiers. Yet, the mine failed entirely as a money making thing. Don Miguel and Don Tomas, the original prospectors and managers were called back. A few Spaniards, however, did not leave but stayed behind at the mine. Among them were Don Angel Moreno and Don Antonio Bona who later purchased with salt a large ranch from the natives of Cervantes.

Now, this is where Lakay Campos comes in. His father, Amoy, a Chinaman, was attracted by the offer of the Spaniards and decided to stay on in Mankayan. He soon married a native girl and they had two sons; Lakay Campos was the youngest. Later on, Amoy, longing for his own land, gathered up his belongings and taking his eldest son with him left his wife and his youngest son in Mankayan, and went his way.

The little boy grew up like any other boy among the natives. He worked hard and was respected by all there; soon he became a leader and was made concejal of his barrio.

After the revolution passed, he was accepted again as a leader for they elected him first as vice-mayor and then twice as mayor of Mankayan. "I was the only one who spoke a little Ilocano", he says, "so they had to elect me. In those days elections were very free and fair. The Americans called us all for a general meeting. Then they introduced the candidates and said, 'Now, stand behind the candidate you want for your mayor'.

Campos' first marriage, in the days preceding the revolution, was unhappy for he had no children. Later, he married Kinya and she bore him five children. He is a happy old man now with his many descendants: children, grandchildren, great grand children, all are his, they will carry on his name.

Father Jose de Haes, the missionary in charge of Mankayan, heard that Lakay Campos was very sick and went to him. This was very recently, in 1946, and the Father was sure the poor old Lakay was not long for this world. He instructed him in his patient way and soon the old man wanted to be baptized. Father poured the saving waters over his head and called him by the beautiful name of Calixto. But he did not die. He is alive and well. "I thank God. My Baptism has made me strong and well", he says.

"Kinya, my faithful wife", he said, "must be with me in heaven. We

cannot be parted there", so on April the third, Kinya too was baptized. Now both are ready to meet the Good God.

Lakay Campos, we salute you! We are proud of your many good works among us. We cherish your advice and your teaching, and we thank you for keeping alive the stories of the early days. As our dear Lord has blessed you with many years on earth, may He welcome you and Kinya into heaven when your day comes.



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