

The Caingin System and the Settling of Mindanao

By R. F. WENDOVER

Since the earliest Spanish rule in the Philippines, Mindanao has been a special problem. Although really conquered and pacified for the first time with the coming of the Americans, it is far from settled. In some respects it presents the same puzzling face as before: a large and potentially rich territory sparsely inhabited by conflicting nomadic groups. The problem of how to develop, populate and govern such elements is still far from solution.

To any one who cares to give more than casual thought to this problem of Mindanao there appear two phases, integral parts of the same. The first is a land-economic problem; the second, a politico-social problem. In considering either we must deal with its correlative.

When glamor and sentiment are put aside and workable facts are sought for it is discovered that both the land and its people are comparatively little known.

Here, as is common with most tropical countries, there obtains a system of temporary cultivation locally called *caingin* which is practiced by the more backward and primitive people of the country. By this system of cultivation, timber lands are successively cut over, burned, cultivated for a season or two, and then abandoned. The abandoned lands are also yearly burned over, eventually resulting in the complete extinction of shrub and tree life and a replacement of forest areas by cogon grass. By this process it is estimated that 18% of the total area of the Philippines has already been reduced to idle land. Extensive areas formerly so cleared were the class of land quite suitable for agriculture; these, instead of being converted to productive farms, stand blocking the way to progress, for once the cogon is established on the land it presents an obstacle to cultivation with which the average Filipino has not the means or tools to cope.

Such lands must wait for a larger investment of capital to make them productive, thus they are retarding all agricultural development. Millions of hectares of potentially productive



Man and Ignorance and an Axe in the Forest

lands lie idle, while the common people are asking for more and more land.

A few months ago I hiked from the head of the Sibuguey to Sindangan bay, and for two

days passed through the bleak skeletons of a former great forest. At least 50,000 hectares of forest has been destroyed in the last ten years, in this vicinity alone. When it is considered that this is going on all over the country, then some idea of the amount of destruction can be gained.

Does the cainginer turn in any great wealth to the country, does he produce and bring to the markets, does he even gain anything for himself? He gets nothing but a bare existence, destroys millions of pesos in timber, and leaves to the country an inheritance of waste land as a menace. Timber destroyed can be pretty accurately calculated. The average hectare of mature timber contains 60,000 board feet; 6,000 board feet will build an excellent home 30x36 feet. Hence every time your cainginer burns over a hectare of forest, lumber is lost to industry, revenues to the government, and ten possible good Filipino homes go up in smoke. These are some of the immediate effects of the caingin system. But it is not merely the immediate destruction of timber or the reduction of the future supply which is so dangerous, it is the upsetting of the whole scheme for normal land development.

Another scourge of the country which is directly traceable to the caingin system is the locust epidemics. The migratory locust can not develop either on the cultivated land or in the forest, but in the immense cogon areas he breeds unmolested, and, when able to fly, descends in an invading army on the cultivated lands, striking terror to the heart of the farmer. There would be no locust epidemics if there were no cogonales, and there would be no cogonales, if there were no caingin-making. But the public and the government do not connect cause with effect, hence we go on spending hundreds of thousands of pesos on locust campaigns, all in futile palliative which can never effect a cure. The trouble behind the trouble is the cainginer.

Other countries who also have the caingin problem to deal with have managed to turn this system of temporary cultivation to some advantage. Java has succeeded in turning many potential caingineres to productive labor

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by selecting lands not needed or unsuitable for farm land, setting out teak plantations by contract with the natives and on condition that they plant their perennial crops of fruit or vegetables among the teak.

"In the course of time various methods of reafforestation were followed. At the present time the forest agricultural system is chiefly practiced, which combines forestry and agricul-

located forest reserves, and the bringing to bear of the police powers of the local government to protect these reserves as other public property is protected is more likely to be successful than the making of reservations and trying to retain these primitive people in them.

If a tribal taboo is effective in causing these people to quit certain land, a governmental taboo should also be made effective in keeping



60,000 Board Feet of Hardwood Lumber Per Hectare Destroyed to Plant Such Little Fields

ture and allows the natives to interplant farming crops with the rows of teak. For the purpose of sooner obtaining the desired covering of the ground, perennials are interplanted, in which case the improved varieties are used by preference.

These teak forests not only supply Java with an abundance of this excellent wood but enable her to export from 15,000 to 30,000 cubic meters annually and to have an annual net profit of from five to six millions florins (approximately equal in pesos). Such a system of combined timber-growing and agriculture and the turning of a destructive element of the population to a productive enterprise, to us in the Philippines and especially in Mindanao seems almost too ideal to be true. But when we think that this system was evolved under conditions similar to those existing here, there appears no insurmountable obstacle to making a beginning in the same direction, here in Mindanao: provided laws and policies were more rationally adapted to conditions.

The establishment of certain strategically

them out of forest reserves. The hill people, who are the most active cingainers, would then turn to the less timbered, grass or brush land and every encouragement should be given them to do so.

Where these people still occupy forested land, some combined forestry-agricultural scheme such as that in Java would avoid the converting of these lands into waste land, when they moved on they would leave a young forest instead of brush or cogon.

Another outlet for the people is work on plantations. While not useful in the more exacting or skilled work, they are well adapted to certain phases of plantation work and many are so employed. These often learn better methods of cultivation, animal breeding, etc., acquire their own farm and settle there. Every modern plantation is a civilizing center in Mindanao.

The civilizing and settling of Mindanao will go on, whether wisely guided or no, and the demand for land, that tremendous urge which may be guided but not stopped, is forcing the

Moro Legend of the First Bird

By SALIP ABU-BAKR SARAMAN

Once there lived a Moro and his wife who had only one son. They lived near the river and earned their living by fishing. When the boy was ten years old, the father died. So the mother and son moved to the nearest town. The mother was very proud, but not too proud to work. She washed clothes for the wealthy Datus of the village. The boy helped his mother by carrying the water for the washing.

By continued hard work, the mother soon earned money enough to buy a piece of land. The next year she was able to buy a cow and a carabao. Now that she had the land and animals with which to work the land she stopped washing for the Datus. The mother and son worked the land and by their combined efforts they were able to earn a good living from their crops.

Now came the time for all people to clean the graves of their relatives, called the month of *Shaban* (February). It was decided that the boy would go to clean the grave of his father while the mother stayed at home and cared for the farm. Early one morning the boy started out to find the grave of his father and clean it. He wandered about the forest for several days but could not find the grave. It had been a long time since they had moved

away from where the father was buried.

All of the people returned from cleaning graves but the boy. The mother became anxious and asked all of her neighbors if they had seen her son. They all said no. The next morning she started out in search of him. She wandered many days in the forest but did not find him. She did not eat or drink during all of this time, yet she did not become hungry or thirsty. During her wanderings she found the grave of her husband. It had not been cleaned, so she knew her son had not been there. That night she slept on a mountain top.

The next morning when she awakened she said to herself, "I will never find my boy again." Then she prayed saying, "O Allah, I will give you my life for the life of my son! I am now alone and have nothing to live for!" She arose and jumped from the cliff.

Instead of being killed, she floated in the air. Wings came out of her shoulders and she became the first bird. This is the bird we now call *kuhao*. Early every morning you can hear it calling, calling, like a person in sorrow. It is the morning calling for her lost boy.—From *Moro Outlook*.

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The long shoremen's strike at Cebu has continued crippling shipping there during the past month, so that some ocean ships are omitting calls at Cebu until the question is settled. Governor Stimson has practically assumed personal charge of the business of keeping peace and order in Cebu, where the Constabulary is on the job. He has made it known that where public order is involved, appeals may be sent direct to him; his letter to Director Cruz of the labor bureau is an important interpretation of his Cornejo letter.