

■ An interesting case of what may be called community specialization in the Philippines.

BICOL DANCING GIRLS AND PRIESTS

Anyone who have ever taken the trip by car will have to agree that the 115 kilometers between Naga City (Camarines Sur) and Legazpi City (Albay) are among the most fascinating in the Philippines. There's never a dull spot along the route, but in my book the first prize goes to this unique town called Polangui. This is because Polangui's chief "export" is women.

Go into any of the plush night-spots along the strip on Roxas blvd. in Manila, and you'll find that not a few young ladies hail from Polangui. In Angeles, Pampanga, Polangui is amply represented. At the "Acacia" Club in Naga-only the other night, purely in the interest of statistical research of course, we polled the demure denizens of the dance floor and discovered that about 70 per cent of them or more hailed from Polangui.

Make no mistake about it. The dance hostesses and *bai-*

larinas sent out by Polangui to spread cheer throughout the country are not fly-by-nights. Their profession is a time-honored tradition of this municipality that dates back to the Spanish regime.

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Even more interesting is the fact that the main headquarters of this feminine cottage industry is a barrio about half a kilometer from the poblacion called "Ponso." On May 27, Ponso and Polangui will celebrate the annual fiesta in typical slambang fashion. Last year, about 400 hostesses from all over this farflung republic "came home" to literally kick up their heels for two nights. A top band was imported from Manila to liven up this sort of busman's holiday.

Do the townsfolk of Polangui resent their "fame"? Not at all, I'm told. The free enterprise of their adventurous sisters and daughters is one of the community's

major sources of income, for the girls dutifully send the profits home and save up the rest towards the inevitable day when the bloom fades from the rose. The only possible object of resentment is the town of Donsol, Sorsogon (still in the Bicol Region), which offers stiff competition to Polangui in the profession. But it seems there's still enough business to go around.

Polangui, incidentally, is one of the five towns in the Third District of Rep. Josefina Duran. But the lady solon is definitely NOT from Polangui.

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Four kilometers from Polangui, on the other hand, is the town of Oas. The municipality of Oas has a distinction of its own — it exports *Priests*. Scores of priests throughout Bicol and the rest of Luzon come from Oas.

In fact, when a baby boy is born, he is jokingly referred to as "another prospective Seminarian."

Equally intriguing is the town of Nabua. This municipality has for decades supplied the United States Navy with Filipino seamen. Many of these US Navy Pinoys have already retired and returned to their hometown. As one speeds along the highway, he can pick out the neat and well-appointed residences of these "pensioners." Moreover, the retired Navymen enjoy PX privileges at US commissaries and go as far away as Sangley Point and Subic Bay to procure the necessities — and perhaps a few "extras." This is reflected in the fact that a bottle of good Scotch sells at about ₱16 on the sly in Nabua. This is known as spreading the benefits around. — *By Maximo V. Soliven, Manila Times.*