

Sacayán ug Pagtuo: The Boholanos’ Participation in the 1754 Military Expedition in Northern Mindanao

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Abstract

When the greatest depredations of the Moro Wars occurred in the Philippines in 1754, the central government in Manila sent a military expedition to Iligan area in northern Mindanao to deter the incursions of the Moro pirates into the Christian villages. The Christian troops emerged victorious in many battles against the Moro raiders. While much accolades have been rendered to the Spaniards for the success of the expedition, the natives’ remarkably courageous involvement cannot be disregarded. Hence, this paper treats the native fighters specifically the Boholanos in the campaign. Sizeable in number, they had valiantly combatted against the marauders and successfully assisted in the defense of the Christian communities.

This paper, therefore, attempts to highlight the Boholano fighters’ participation and contribution to the expedition by understanding a brief historical background which led to the sending of the expedition, by revisiting the events in which they were particularly involved, and by analyzing the implications of their participation which can be summarized in two key Cebuano-Binisaya terms, *sacayán* and *pagtuo*. These two significant words are not only expressive of the Boholanos’ valuable involvement but also of their distinct characteristics of bravery and seamanship, and fidelity to Christianity as displayed in the campaign.

Keywords: *sacayán, pagtuo*, 1754 military expedition, Boholanos, Moro pirates

Honoring the Co-Agents of History

In the interplay between the colonizers and the colonized in significant events, history tends to esteem the former but sideline the latter. Historical narratives oftentimes honor the colonizers as the main protagonists but hardly pay tribute to the local men and women who considerably participated in the shaping of the Philippine history. Perhaps, in disqualifying the natives' participation, there would arise difficulty in acknowledging the events during the years of colonization as major part of their own history. As a result, the colonial era may be simply alleged as irrelevant for this may not be accounted as part of the Philippine history but a mere history of colonial power in the Philippines. It must be noted, therefore, to consider the less viewed spectrum in any historical events, highlight the fact how the locals have made the foreign their own, and recognize how they formed history and how history formed them.¹

In the history of the defense of the Christian communities against the Moro pirates during the Spanish colonization, credit are mostly given to the fighting friars and missionaries like Fray Agustin de San Pedro, also called El Padre Capitán, and Fr. José Ducós as their memories have been etched in the annals of the history of the Church in the Philippines. However, the natives who composed the majority in the courageous defense of Christian communities against the piratical attacks have been apparently forgotten. It is, therefore, rightful to honor them as co-agents in the unfolding of these historical events. The Boholanos in the 1754 Military Expedition exemplify a proof that the history of a people is shaped not just by the colonizers but by the colonized as well. Recognizing this fact, Fr. Miguel Bernad, S.J. (1968, p. 159) pays tribute to the Boholanos as he says, "This is perhaps a point not sufficiently remembered: the immense debt that the country owes to the little island of Bohol. Bohol has been the home of millions of unknown people who, through three centuries, have lived the Christian Faith and when necessary, have fought for it."

This paper, therefore, attempts to highlight the valuable participation and contribution of the Boholanos in co-weaving the narrative of this particular historical event. To hopefully facilitate a good understanding of the matter at hand, three important parts are worth considering: first, the historical background of the 1754 Military Expedition against the Moro pirates; second, the Boholanos' participation in the expedition; and third, the implications of the Boholanos' participation that can be summarized in two Cebuano-Binisaya words: *sacayán* and *pagtuo*.

Year 1754: The Greatest Depredations in the History of the Moro Wars

Piratical-raids had been a customary practice of the ancestors of the Philippine natives even before the coming of the Spaniards to their shores. This practice had been their source of living as they looted valuables and kidnapped able-bodied villagers to be sold to slavery. Scott (1991, p. 49) observes that the practice of looting and slave-raiding has been testified by the widespread use of the word *mangayaw* or *pangayaw* in the Philippines even to this day. From the root word *kayaw* which means "assault or war," this word was used to refer to the raids in the event of inter-tribal rivalry. De Loarca in *Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas* (in Blair and Robertson, 1903, pp. 36-37) wrote, "The natives were wont to make captives and slaves with great readiness in illegal warfare and for very slight reasons." This customary practice was common among the Visayan people; hence, they were generally called *Pintados* because of the tattoos on their bodies which were not for the sake of aesthetics but were primarily as Scott (1991, p. 52) notes, "sure signs of recognized valor in raids by land and by sea." Boholanos were also known of these piratical practices. Alcina (1981, p. 129), a Jesuit missionary in the Visayas in the 17th century, wrote that the island of Bohol was also known as *Dumaguít*. This word which has been commonly used in the Visayan language up

to the present is derived from the root word dagit which means “to snatch away rapaciously or to carry off as a plundering bird.” This ancient name of Bohol supports the claim that even way before the Spanish colonization, their ancestors were already accustomed to the prevalent practice of marauding expedition.

When the Spaniards came to the Philippines, there was a massive conversion of the natives to Christianity that changed the natives’ way of living and eventually put an end to their normal piratical practices. However, problems arose as many inhabitants from Mindanao and Sulu were not subdued by the Spanish colonial rule. These people still remained in their customary raids with the newly established Christian communities as the easy target of their attacks.² This became a major problem for the Spanish authorities and missionaries since it perpetually disrupted their missionary efforts of organizing Christian communities. To prevent the raiders from wreaking further havoc on many Christian villages, Spanish authorities sent military expeditions to Sulu and Mindanao to subdue them. But these efforts had failed time and again and only severed more deeply the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims. This phenomenon in the history of the Philippines is called Moro Wars which had gone on for centuries.

In the history of Moro Wars, the year 1754 was described by a noted historian De Zuñiga (1973, p. 167) as the greatest eruption the Moro pirates ever made to the Christian villages in the Philippines. With so much boldness, they attacked the Christian villages in the Visayas and even in Luzon which were very proximate to Manila, the seat of the Spanish colonial government.³ Even the Christian communities in Mindanao were not spared from the piratical attacks. One notable example was the siege of Tandag. Tandag fell on the ferocity of the raiders after several months of persistent piratical attacks. This tragedy of Tandag was “the blackest in the history and fort of village of Tandag, a year of rivalry, treason and destruction” (Schreurs, 2000, pp. 232-233).

There are some plausible reasons for the greatest incursion of pirates in the history of Moro Wars. One is the prevalence of the slave raiding in the Philippines which was aggravated by the high economic premium of slaves in the slave markets in Mindanao, Jolo, and other places in the South.⁴ Another is the emergence of the Iranunss, the Malanao-speaking Moro raiders dispersed across many places in Mindanao and the fiercest among the Moro raiders as they struck danger and terror to many inhabitants not just in the Philippines, but also in nearby places.

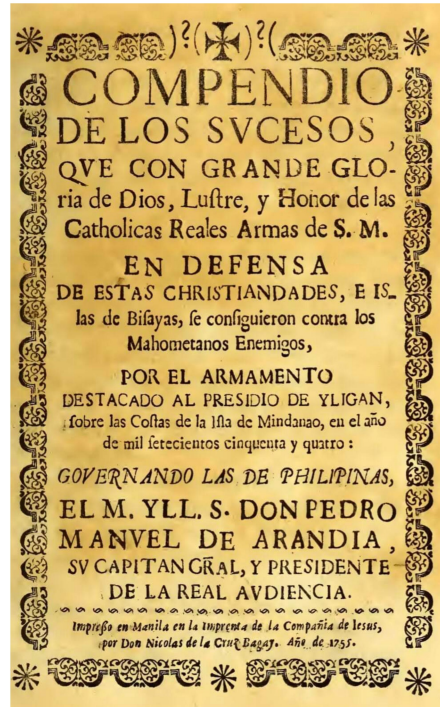
Nevertheless, the year 1754 was also an opportune time for the Christians. When the Moro raids persisted, Christian vigilance and heroism heightened. In many Christian villages, Christians stood their ground and spoiled the piratical attacks as in the case in Palompon in Leyte (Blair and Robertson, 1907), Lubungan and Iligan in Northern Mindanao (Concepción, 1792, pp. 232-244). The case of Iligan is significantly dealt with since the 1754 Military Expedition was sent to this area to save Iligan and its neighboring Christian communities from piratical destructions. Iligan was permanently exposed to the raiders’ attacks due to its proximity to Lanao region, a Moro territory. Panguil Bay and the rivers along the area were the chief exits of the raiders going to their marauding exploits. With this situation, the Spanish authorities in Iligan put forth a proposal to the central government to strengthen the existing fort in the area, build another one, stabilize the garrison, and send an expedition to augment the military defense against the raiders.⁶ The expedition was first led by Valdes but his inefficiency gave Fr. José Ducós⁷, a Jesuit missionary assigned in Iligan, an opportunity to assume the leadership. A son of a colonel, he was an able commander of the expedition as seen in the successful resistance efforts against Moro raids in 1754.

The Boholanos' Participation: "To destroy their enemies or be themselves destroyed"

As narrated in the 1755 pamphlet Boholanos participated in the expedition flesh and blood. They were from Baclayon, Tagbilaran, Maribojoc, Inabanga, Loboc, and Loay. They were sizeable in number, although the exact number of those enlisted cannot be ascertained. There is discrepancy in the presentation of the exact number of the Boholano fighters. The pamphlet states that 500 natives composed the fleet of Fr. Ducós. The natives were from Iligan and Bohol. It is not explicit whether the Boholanos or the Iliganons composed the majority of the natives. However, in the letter of Fr. Ducós dated January 13, 1755 indicating his intention of conquering the Moro raiders around Lanao Lake, he wrote that he had 500 Boholanos in his current fleet (Bernad, 1968, p. 159). It is not clear, however, whether the 500 Boholanos were part of the original contingent or some of them were reinforcements of the original contingent in the course of the expedition. Whatever the exact number of the Boholano fighters in this expedition was, the important thing is they had proven to be significant in assisting the delivery of victories against the Moro raiders.

Under the competent command of Fr. Ducós, the campaign against the Moro raiders became intensified and systematic. The goal of the fleet was to prevent the pirates from attacking Christian communities by sealing off their main passageways namely, the Pangil Bay and the two rivers on the Lanao coast, Linamon and Liangan. To achieve this goal, the fleet was divided into three. First, the galera San Felipe and boats from Iligan were stationed to guard Linamon. Second, four Boholano boats were assigned at the mouth of Liangan River. Third, the Triunfo and several smaller crafts were assigned to guard the entrance of Pangil Bay. With this arrangement, the fleet acquired an advantageous position against the raiders. As can be seen, the Boholano fighters were given so much trust that they were particularly assigned to seal off Liangan River, one of the major passageways in the area. While four Boholano boats were particularly assigned in Liangan, other Boholanos were engaged to assist in guarding the other posts. Therefore, to demonstrate how the Boholano fighters helped deliver the victory, several arm encounters are worth mentioning.

First, as stated earlier, there were four Boholano boats stationed at the mouth of Liangan River. The Boholanos engaged in one of the earliest battles in the intensified campaign at Liangan. On July 24, the Boholanos fought a fierce battle against a flotilla of Moro boats returning from their expeditionary raids loaded with booty and Christian captives. This was the scenario Fr. Ducós found



The pamphlet describes the events of the 1754 military campaign against the Moro pirates in Iligan-Misamis area. It starts with the sending of the military expedition in January 1754 and ends with the celebration of its victories in Manila on January 1755. In the front cover, it is written: "Compendio de los sucesos que con grande Gloria de Dios, lustre y honor de los Católicas Armas Reales de S.M. en defense de estas Christiandades é Islas Bisayas se consiguieron contra los Mahometanos enemigos por el Armamento destacado al presidio de Iligan, sobre las costas de la isla de Mindanao, en el año de mil setecientos cinquenta y quatro; gobernando las Philipinas el M. Ill. S. Don Pedro Manuel de Arandia, su Capitan Gral. Y Presidente de la Real Audiencia. Impreso en Manila en la Imprenta de la Compañia de Jesús por Don Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay, año de 1755."

when he came to the rescue with two boats, one of those from Bohol and the other from Initao. Displaying their valor, the Boholanos and the men from Iligan and Initao outfought the Moro pirates and forced them to flee by land into the interior, abandoning their boats and their booty and throwing their weapons into the river. Although the troops were not able to rescue those Christians who were taken when the pirates fled, they still managed to retrieve the booty, one native cannon, and a church bell. The Boholano fighters who had put in nothing but their blood, sweat and tears during that battle were from Tagbilaran, Maribojoc, Inabanga and Baclayon.

Second, on the night of August 7, a fierce battle broke out when the Moro pirates began a clandestine operation as they came in close with 20 boats under the obscurity of nighttime. However, the Christians detected this action and with Triunfo and three other smaller boats, one manned by the Spaniards and two maneuvered by the Boholanos, they hastily advanced to their enemies. The battle began at about nine o'clock and lasted for about four hours. The Moro pirates suffered great loss in this encounter as evidenced by floating corpses and timbers of broken boats the following morning.

Third, on August 23, the Boholano fighters, together with Fr. Ducós and men from Iligan, engaged in a bloody encounter which cost the lives not just of 300 Moro pirates, but also of several Christians. Receiving an information that the pirates were in Layauan and Langaran areas, Fr. Ducós, with Triunfo and eight other boats from Bohol and Iligan immediately responded and went to the area where they found a flotilla of 16 Moro boats. However, during the battle, Triunfo was not much of an advantage in close-distance combat because of its huge size, thus leaving the Christian fighters with no option but to use the natives' smaller native boats. The battle was so fierce that it lasted for seven hours, from seven in the morning until two in the afternoon. Christian fighters emerged victorious owing mainly to the heroism of the men from Iligan but it paid a heavy price for several were killed and many were wounded including Fr. Ducós. He was struck by the explosion of the overheated cannon. It knocked him unconscious for hours and because of this, his men feared he would die. Fortunately, he regained consciousness but he awoke with his right hand already shattered and his left eye permanently blind.

Fourth, at the dawn of September 4, the fighters from Loboc, Loay and Initao attacked the Moro Datu Sabandal and his men whose boat was recognized on the coast of Linamong and Larapan rivers. Trying to break the marauders' stubborn defense, the captain from Loay named D. Ygnacio Clemente together with his men jumped into the enemies' boat. By thrusting two spears, he killed the moro leader but was also eventually killed by the pirates. In retaliation, the Boholano fighters killed them all with their knives. In that fateful event, seventeen Christian captives, who were in this boat, were saved.

Fifth, on September 18 and 19, a new battle broke out near Misamis. The Boholanos from Maribojoc emerged as heroes as they boarded one Moro boat and fought hand-to-hand with the enemies. All adversaries perished except for seven who escaped to the shore but were pursued by the Boholanos. Eventually, four were killed with their spears. Over a hundred lives were lost in this battle.

The Christians were victorious in almost all battles. They fought tooth and nail allowing no laxity of strength and valor. They shed sweat and blood to prevail amidst such terrible ordeals. As Bernad (1968, p. 152) describes, "It was – like all wars – a bloody campaign in which no quarter was given. The Christian communities were fighting for survival. They had to destroy their enemies or be themselves destroyed."

This second important part of the presentation illustrates the actual participation of the Boholano fighters in the 1754 Military Expedition against the Moro pirates in northern Mindanao. In this fight for survival of Christian communities, the Boholano fighters showed their gallantry which reached out beyond their borders and extended their hands in the name of Christian fraternity which aimed at protecting the dignity and freedom of their brethren. Their heroism mirrored such selfless character that motivated them to fight fearlessly for others' welfare.

Sacayán ug Pagtuo: The Implications of the Boholanos' Participation

The first implication refers to *sacayán* of which a discussion is necessary for the following reasons: first, it is mentioned in the 1755 pamphlet; second, it had significance to the Boholanos; and third, it was the symbol of the Boholanos' participation in the expedition where they showed their excellent seamanship and aptitude for water combat.

First, the 1755 pamphlet refers to *sacayanes* as the sea vessels of the natives in the battles used during the campaign. The Boholano fighters boarded their *sacayanes* as they cruised to fight and defend the Christian communities against the incursions of the raiders. Without the *sacayanes*, it would have been impossible for the Boholano fighters to counteract the naval force of the Moro pirates. The fleet from Manila, which was commanded first by Valdes was augmented by *sacayanes* manned by the Boholanos as it made a stopover in Cebu. It is to be noted that the term *sacayán* is not particularly referring to the boat of the Boholanos only. A short discussion focusing on the *sacayán* in relation to the Boholanos seems necessary in order to understand the expertise of seamanship of the Boholanos as manifested in the campaign.

It is interesting to note that in Bohol, *sacayán* is still a prevalent local term for native boat. In usual cases, the origin of a term has its relationship with the daily living of the people. *Sacayán* must denote something related to the life of the Boholanos in particular. Etymologically, the root word of *sacayán* is *sakay*, a common Filipino term which means to ride or embark for a travel. Referring to a boat, *sacayán* denotes a medium of transportation by water, whether by paddling, rowing, or sailing. Furthermore, it denotes a common means of traveling from one island to another in view of the archipelagic nature of the Philippines. In those days, traveling by water was easier than by land. The use of *sacayán* connected island to island, people to people. The Filipinos, therefore, were maritime people who were connected, not separated, by inter-island channels and seas (Scott, 1998, p. 83).

Alcina (2002, pp. 197-201), a Jesuit missionary in the Visayas in the 17th century, observed that the term *sacayán* was the generic term for boat or ship. There were varieties of *sacayan*. One type was the *balutu* or *baruto* which is the smallest and the most common among the vessels of the Bisaya. It was made of a single log hollowed out on the inside and shaped on the outside in a manner suitable for sailing. *Balutu* had a variation called *tilimbaw*, a larger one which carries one or two planks attached to each side. *Tilimbaw* was very common in Bohol. Instead of planks, the Boholanos used *upak-upak* or *dagpak* (bark of the tree) attached to each side of the vessel. However, it cannot be ascertained whether this type of Boholano vessel was used during the campaign in 1754 as the 1755 pamphlet only mentions the term *sacayán*.

Second, *sacayán* was particularly important to the Boholanos. Before the coming of the Spaniards, they were accustomed to cruise the seas in their vessels as they were engaged in raiding expeditions plundering coastal villages in the archipelago. Miguel de Loarca, one of the first

conquistadores to arrive in the Philippines, wrote in his *Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas* in Blair and Robertson (1903, pp. 45-47), “On the other side of the island of Matan (Mactan) and farther south, about eight leagues from the settlement of Cebu, lies the island of Bohol, which is an encomienda of 2,000 Indians. The natives of this island are closely related to the people of Cebu and are almost one and the same people. Those who are inhabiting the coast regions are mainly fishermen. They are excellent oarsmen and before the arrival of the Spaniards, they were accustomed to cruise about in their vessels on marauding expeditions.”

From Loarca’s observation, we can extract the fact that the Boholanos, even before the coming of the Spaniards, had the natural nerve of bravery and excellent seamanship. These abilities were again displayed during the expedition. This connects to the third significance of *sacayán*. It became the symbol of the Boholanos’ participation in the expedition where both bravery and excellent seamanship were displayed.

It must be noted that bravery was an outstanding character among the Boholanos. Many of the Spanish chroniclers agreed on this. Chirino (2010, p. 124), a Jesuit chronicler described them this way, “Spirited and brave, proven by many of them, they hold up the name ‘Boholanos,’ as we that of Castilians, or Spaniards, and that which the ancient Romans preserved in foreign realms.” This character is in consonance with the description of a Jesuit historian, Francisco Colin in his work “Jesuit Missions in 1656” in Blair and Robertson (1905, p. 88), where it is stated that the Boholanos were warlike and had committed plenty of troubles in the past. Another Jesuit historian, Father Pedro Murillo Velarde agreed with this as he said, “the Boholanos are the most warlike and valiant among the Indians” (Blair and Robertson, 1905, p. 237). During the Spanish colonization, despite being hailed as warlike and combative, the Boholanos remained submissive and loyal to Spain. As Ruiz (1925, p. 649), a Recollect historian, puts it, “In more than one occasion, they had proven their submission and respect to Spain, fighting bravely on the side of the loyal forces against the enemies of the fatherland.”⁸ The bravery of the Boholanos was admired by Fr. Ducós as he wrote in his letter dated January 13, 1755 stating his intention to conquer the pirates’ territory around Lanao lake. He further wrote, “With 500 Boholanos that I already have, send a reinforcement of 300 infantrymen from Manila and another 500 men from Bohol and some from Bukidnon, and I give my word that they (the pirates) will be going to drink the water from the lake of Malanao.”⁹

Moreover, the Boholanos possessed the ability of excellent seamanship as observed by Loarca when he said that the Boholanos were excellent oarsmen. In an article, “The Tamblot Revolt: Short-lived but Extensive,” in Villegas (2003, p. 76), the Filipino historian Romanillos affirms such observation as he writes about the Boholanos: “Before the coming of the Spaniards, Boholanos cruised about their boats, plundering coastal settlements of adjoining islands. Even during the colonial rule, brave fighters from this central Visayan island were conscripted to join punitive expeditions against Moro pirates in southern Mindanao and Sulu.” Since most of the battles in the entire expedition basically took place on water, the Boholanos’ aptitude on seamanship was greatly displayed. Their *sacayanes* augmented the naval fleet. Their excellent skill on water combat was proven by their vigilant guarding of the Liangan River; their active joining with the other Christian vessels to prevent raiders from passing through the lairs in the rivers and bays; and their successful warding off the Moro presence along the northern coast of Mindanao.

The second implication that can be deduced from the event of 1754 is *pagtuo* which in English can be readily translated as faith. This *pagtuo* refers specifically to the Christian faith that the Boholanos inherited from the missionaries during the Spanish colonization. It is very important to deal with this matter as it poses relevance to the discussion here. *Pagtuo* can be understood in

two things: first, Boholanos possessed this faith manifested in Christian value of solidarity with their brothers and sisters; and second, Boholano fighters were able to facilitate in the defense of the yields of Christian faith.

It would be better to have a glimpse of the transformation of the lives of the Boholanos when Christianity arrived at the Boholano shores. They had become faithful Christians. Since the arrival of the first missionaries in Bohol, many had embraced the newly introduced faith, thus facilitating the transformation of the lives of many Boholanos. One of the first Jesuit missionaries, Fr. Gabriel Sánchez witnessed significant conversions among many Boholanos as indicated on his letter dated October 5, 1600. He wrote, “I could report special conversions, many and marvelous, which in three months God has effected, of the men on this island who were like devils in human flesh, leading men, chiefs of their villages but worse than tigers and lions; and watching them now daily falling on their knees, transformed, tamer than lambs, loathing their past life, asking with deep desires for holy baptism” (Chirino 2010, p. 127). The once warlike and arrogant people then, were converted now and became gentle, submissive and obedient Christians. The Spanish chronicler, Chirino (1969, p. 428), affirmed such fruit of Christian mission in the island: “Most of them were pagans, inured to warfare, robbery and bloodshed... Those who have been in Bohol and are familiar with the intractability of those people have the highest esteem for the conversion that our Lord had wrought in them.” The conversion of these natives was quick as they received the Gospel and “became docile sons of the Catholic Church without opposing that obstinate resistance to the good news which was experienced in the other islands, and which cost the life of one of its first apostles” (Blair and Robertson 1905, p. 325).

The Christian fervor of the Boholanos had been sustained throughout the years. Even amidst insurrections which, as indicated in the annual report of the Augustinian Recollects, were “born rather of repugnance to the Spaniards than of systematic opposition to the Christian Faith” (Blair and Robertson, 1905, 326) and after the expulsion of the Jesuits and the coming of the Recollects, the Boholanos had remained faithful Christians and kept to their hearts the Christian values inculcated in them since the beginning of the Christian mission on the island. Centuries after the start of the Christian mission, Ruiz (1925, p. 739) summed up the achievement of the Christianization of Bohol by his appraisal of the Boholanos as “the most docile, the most instructed, the most Christian in the Philippines.”¹⁰

Looking at the context of the Boholanos’ religious fervor during that time and the character of the fighters in the campaign, they emanated the characteristic of Christian solidarity with their brethren in danger. Their participation in the campaign disproved the myth of Boholanos’ selfish attitude of *idza-idza, aho-ahon* as they selflessly helped their Christian brethren in northern Mindanao to stand their ground against the Moro incursions. They confronted the dangers of Moro piratical attacks and fought the enemies in many battles, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the Christians in northern Mindanao.

In general, the heroism of the Boholano fighters in the 1754 Expedition resulted in the successful defense of Christianity. Let it be clarified that the Moro raids did not completely stop after their series of defeats during the battles in 1754 along the northern coast of Mindanao. After that year, Moro raids had gone through more than a century of striking terror on the Christian villages in the Philippine archipelago. However, the Christians strongly challenged and suppressed the seemingly invincible Moro force during the most atrocious year of the Moro depredations. Their victories in the campaign reverberated a definitive message of Christian gallantry, ready to confront the hostilities of the enemies and very much capable of crushing the inimical force, and thereby, defending themselves

and their communities. As the general goal of the campaign, the defense of themselves and their communities was also the sweetest accomplishment when victories were delivered. And in the spirit of Christian solidarity, the Boholanos were actively involved in the defense of Christianity which started to thrive in the local communities of northern Mindanao, and significantly acted as “brothers’ keepers” to the Christians who constantly suffered from the ravages of the Moro raiders.

In particular, the participation of the Boholanos in this campaign resulted in the following: first, they assisted in the protection of human lives. It is to be noted that the Moro war was perhaps the bloodiest occurrence in Philippine history. The Moro pirates were inclined to murder. They had the innocent and the women, the old and the infirmed as the easy preys of their brutality. They were capable to massacre mercilessly all of the inhabitants of Christian villages. In these events of Moro piratical brutality, human life was treated as a cheap commodity. This would be very likely to happen to the many Christians in northern Mindanao during the most disastrous year of the Moro wars. Many Christians would perish had the military campaign not arrived to their defense. The Christian fighters, particularly the Boholanos, had prevented the evil motive of killing ruthlessly many Christian inhabitants in northern Mindanao by guarding the territory and fighting against the enemies. They defended themselves by combatting against the enemies in the protection and preservation of the lives of the innocents. They fought to stop the raiders from harassing the innocent Christians who started to settle in peaceful and harmonious living. Indeed, in carrying out this objective, the Christian fighters fulfilled the Christian duty of the preservation and security of human life, especially among the innocents, a great Christian duty in view of the fifth commandment of the Decalogue.¹²

Second, they helped in the deliverance of the Christian natives from being thrown to slavery. Slave raiding was prevalent in the Philippines even before the coming of the Spaniards. But the high premium of the slaves in the slave markets of Mindanao, Jolo, and Dutch East Indies in the second half of 18th century, especially with the emergence of the Iranuns, aggravated the intensity of slave raiding. An economic motive was now attached with these raids. Moro raiders attacked the Christian villages in the Philippines, among many reasons, to capture able-bodied individuals. This was seen in all of the Moro raids on the villages in which they carried off hundreds of captives to slavery. As a result of the slave raiding, the population of the Christian territories had been dwindling. The loss of Christians to slavery was a big blow to the missionary effort which sought to convert the natives and bring them to the Christianfold. Missionaries saw the inestimable worth in them and thus, inculcated in them the values of Christian freedom and dignity. But slave raiding trampled and wasted all these efforts. However, the 1754 military campaign spoiled this barbarous motive of the Moro raiders. The Boholanos fought the slave raiders in the campaign to help preserve human dignity and freedom among the native Christians in northern Mindanao against the threat of slavery. The Boholanos’ participation confronted the threat in slave raiding and fostered to uphold the dignity in every Christian. Thus, the Boholanos’ participation in the campaign spared many Christians particularly in northern Mindanao from the den of slavery.

Third, the Boholano participation preserved Christian communities. The preservation of the Christian communities in northern Mindanao can be seen in two aspects. First, Moro raiders wreaked great destructions on Christian communities. It must be noted that the missionaries founded Christian communities. They worked indefatigably for the gathering together of the natives to settle themselves into communities. This endeavor was called *reducción*, that is, “the process of gathering the scattered settlements of Indios into villages or towns to make possible lasting evangelization” (Schumacher, 1979, p. 409). For the missionaries, Christianization of these communities was the primary focus of this effort. However, the building of communities found a dangerous threat in the

Moro raids for the raiders plundered Christian communities, burned and destroyed houses, churches and other infrastructures. Admitting that the lives of the people were spared from death or slavery, they still would have suffered terribly from the aftermath of the Moro raids. They still would have been left with nothing but burned houses, dead animals, destroyed crops, and severed means of livelihood. Then, they would have started their life anew until the next Moro raid.

The repeated cycle of building and rebuilding Christian communities had become the dreadful pattern especially in Palilan, Langaran and Layauan, communities in the northern coast of Mindanao that were terribly ravaged by the Moro raiders in the 1750s.

Second, the Moro raiders at that period of time had the intention of taking possession of some Christian communities. They even dared to start settling themselves in these communities like in the case of Layauan. This motive became pervasive in the year 1754, the height of Moro wars. If the Christian defenses had failed against the onslaught of the enemy, the entire Christian community would have been overrun, taken hold, and claimed as part of the Moro jurisdiction. With this, Bernad (1968, p. 143) opines, “Had this patterned continued uninterrupted, the province of Misamis Occidental would today be a Muslim province like Lanao del Sur.”

Therefore, the 1754 Military Campaign was greatly vital in impeding the destructive intentions of the Moro raiders to take over the Christian communities in northern Mindanao. The Boholano fighters’ participation was unreservedly indispensable on this regard as they bravely drove the marauders off from northern Mindanao. They prevented the raiders from exiting through the bays and rivers in northern Mindanao and continuing their raiding exploits. Their participation assisted to realize the common Christian sentiment of preventing the Moro presence from penetrating into these communities especially during the peak of the history of Moro depredations.

In the 1754 Military Expedition in northern Mindanao, *sacayán* and *pagtuo* demonstrate the Boholanos’ distinct attitudes of heroic bravery and excellent seamanship coupled with the unwavering Christian faith. For certain, these attitudes gained for them both respect among their commander and their comrades, and fear among their enemies. In that fateful year of the Christian struggle for survival, those valiant Boholano fighters had left an indelible mark in the Philippine history. Unfortunately, their heroism has been cast to the peripheries of the memory of their people. Their honor, therefore, should be remembered so as to enkindle an inspirational lesson that the history of their land is shaped not only by the colonizers but by the native men and women as well.

Notes

¹ Ocampo (2021, April 14) writes, “It is unfortunate that my generation lucked out on knowing more about Spanish Philippines because it was said that those 333 years were not Philippine history but merely the history of Spain in the Philippines. Those years were allegedly irrelevant to us. The 500th anniversary of the Magellan expedition inspires us to look beyond past hurts and appreciate the blanks and nuances in our past. Resistance to colonial rule is not always about oppression and battles but how we have made the foreign our own, how we formed history, and how it formed us.”

² “The harm done by these Moro raids upon the Visayan Islands was double: for besides the damage done by the actual raids, there was also the fear and terror that spread among the native population, who, disarmed by the Spaniards to whom they were tribute-paying subjects, were neither defended by the Spaniards nor were allowed to defend themselves,” as Antonio de Morga noted in his *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, a text included in the book of Blair and Robertson (1907, p. 50).

³ The year 1754 was “especially disastrous to the Philippines on the account of the Moro raids; thousands of people were slain, and other thousands carried away captive; even the coasts of Luzon were ravaged, and the population of the Visayas suffered a notable diminution.” See notes in “Moro Raids Repulsed by the Visayans,” in Blair and Robertson (1907, p. 50).

⁴ The Spanish Court lodged a protest with the court in Holland over the fact that the Dutch colonial government in Batavia (present-day Indonesia) tolerated the sale of the Indio slaves in the Dutch East Indies. Slaves were not sometimes sold for money, but for arms and ammunition (Bernad, 2004, p. 69).

⁵ “To be a maritime raider among the Iranuns meant that it was a vocation not merely of sea warriors, but of merchants, noblemen, including datus and sheriffs, and even sultans” (Warren, 2002, p. 43).

⁶ Don Felipe Carvallo, the Corregidor of Iligan sent an appeal to the Governor-General Obando to strengthen the fort of Iligan and the appeal was seconded by Fr. José Ducós (Vidal, 1888, p. 301).

⁷ He was born on January 8, 1724 in Barcelona. A Catalan, his real name was ‘Josep.’ (José is the Castillian form.) On July 25, 1735, he entered the Society of Jesus novitiate at Tarragona, Spain, and ten years later, was ordained to the priesthood in Mexico City (see Bernad, 2004, pp. 98-100).

⁸ Original Spanish text: “En más de una ocasion habían demostrado su sumisión y respeto a España, peleando denodadamente al lado de los leales contra los enemigos de la Patria.”

⁹ “Vengan de refuerzo 300 de Manila, y con los 500 Boholanos que tengo y otros 500 que haré venir de Bohol, y con los Montesés, doy mi palabra, que he de ir a beber el agua de la laguna de Malanao (Bernad 1968, p. 159).

¹⁰ “Los Padres de Bohol eran sin duda alguna los más encariñados con su Isla, porque, en efecto, desde los primeros Recoletos que administraron hasta los últimos, todos habían puesto su empeño y todas sus energías en el bienestar moral y material de aquellos Isleños. A su vista tenían pueblos de los más dóciles, de los más instruidos y de los más Cristianos de Filipinas.”

¹¹ Oral tradition claims that *idza-idza*, *aho-aho* originates during the period of the Dagohoy Rebellion. The anti-Spanish elements from Cebu, Leyte and Negros requested Dagohoy to help them in their struggle against the Spaniards in their respective places by sending some of his fighting men. However, they were denied of their request with this undiplomatic response from Dagohoy, “Our fight here (in Bohol) is ours. The problem in your place is yours. Can you not fight without us?” Since then, the Boholanos have been generally pinned such naming. See Apalisok (1999, p. 5-6).

¹² Another kind of lawful slaying belongs to the civil authorities, to whom is entrusted the power of life and death, by the legal and judicious exercise of which to punish the guilty and protect the innocent. The just use of this power, far from involving the crime of murder, is an act of paramount obedience to this (fifth) commandment which prohibits murder. The end of the commandment is the preservation and security of human life. Now the punishments inflicted by the civil authority, which the legitimate avenger of crime, naturally tend to this end, since they give security to life by repressing outrage and violence. See McHugh and Callan (1974, p. 421)

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