

Fishermen's Migration Amidst Depleting Seas: A History of Fishers' Migration from Calatrava, Negros Occidental to Miagao, Iloilo (1961–1995)

By

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Migration or the movement of people that “involve the permanent or quasi-permanent relocation of an individual or group of individuals from a place of origin to a place of destination” has been an important historical force that has formed societies across the globe.¹ This movement ushered interaction of people that resulted to major historical achievements such as the spread and enrichment of cultures, exchange of knowledge and technology, globalisation, among many others. The motivations that underlie migration are complex, but it is economic factors that exert the strongest influence. While some people migrate for economic advancement, the movement of many peoples in Third World countries like the Philippines is primarily a “survival strategy”.² In the Philippines, migration has become a “source of much of the nation’s history.”³ Theories concerning the origins of the islands underscore the key role of migration. With the growth of regional economies in the nineteenth century, migration became the “most dynamic component of population change in the Philippines.”⁴ Despite its meaning to history, organised attempt to study migration particularly internal migration in the Philippines only began in mid-twentieth century.⁵ Pioneering works in this field had been done mostly by demographers and economists who were more concerned with “the volume and direction of movements, and the demographic characteristics of persons engaged in the movement” than the motivational aspect of migration.⁶ Since 2000, however, there has been a drop in the publication on internal migration in the country which explains its paucity in literature. Until recently, migration studies in the Philippines have been biased towards international and transnational migration, and relatively neglectful of internal migration despite censuses reveal that Filipinos are highly mobile inside the country.⁷

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At the center of the Philippine islands, the Visayan region has borne witness to this long tradition of internal migration. In western Visayas, intra-regional migration between the islands of Panay and Negros particularly between the provinces of Iloilo and Negros Occidental since mid-nineteenth century has been an indispensable theme in the social and economic history of the region and the larger nation. These patterns of in-migration and out-migration have been conventionally explained by the historic boon and bane of the sugarcane industry which remains an important industry in the region. Albeit true, this is just one of the many factors that influence complex patterns of migration in the region. It could not adequately explain the whole phenomenon especially when one wishes to look into the migration of another equally important sector of its population, the fishers. In the Visayan archipelago in central Philippines, fisher's migration is a regular feature of maritime life. According to maritime anthropologist Zayas, fishers are "the most mobile population" whose "residence is never permanent".⁸ Despite its prevalence, Seki contended that it has "rarely attracted academic interest", hence, the sparse literature.⁹ To Zayas, fisher's migration is cyclical and is primarily motivated by the seasonality of fishing, that is, when fishes no longer abound a traditional fishing ground, fishers move to another place where fish is abundant. Seki, however, pointed out that this is a simplistic way of thinking about the cause of the phenomenon, especially since there are cases of fishers' migration that involve permanent change of residence. Their migration is unique; an in-depth study of migration of a group of fishers is important. "Questions such as what actually happened in their place of origin, their process of settling in new places, and the effect of their in-migration on the local community remain to be studied."¹⁰ These questions helped conceptualise this study.

This study examines the history of fishers' migration from a fishing community in Barangay San Isidro, Calatrava, Negros Occidental to Barangay Baybay Norte, Miagao, Iloilo, from 1961 to 1995. Specifically, it answered the following questions: 1) What was the situation in Calatrava, Negros Occidental at the time of outmigration? 2) What was the situation in Miagao, Iloilo at the time of in-migration? 3) How did the situations in Calatrava vis-à-vis Miagao affect the fishers' decision to migrate? 4) What was the process of settling down in Miagao? and 5) What is the effect of in-migration have on the fishing industry of Miagao? This study used a historical perspective which seeks to understand a present subject, i.e. fishers' migration, using the past.¹¹ Gathering and interpretation of data was guided by Everett S. Lee's "A Theory of Migration" which hypothesises that the interplay of factors associated with the area of origin; factors associated with the area of destination; intervening obstacles; and personal factors, influence the act of migration.¹² Oral narrative was used because migration history is likely unrecorded, ill-documented, and hidden, and the migrant's own story provides an essential record.¹³ Thirteen key informants were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire divided into demographic profile, migration history, factors of migration, processes of migration and integration to the new place, and the effects of migration to the

fishing industry of Miagao. This study used purposive sampling using the following criteria: 1) must be a resident of San Isidro, Calatrava prior to transfer in Miagao sometime beginning in 1961; 2) must be a present resident of Miagao at the time of study; 3) a senior member of a migrant fishing household; and 4) must be no less than 50 years of age at the time of interview. Ten participants were initially identified but three additional informants were later interviewed as recommended by the initial informants. Interviews with informants' spouses, their relatives in San Isidro, and officials and local residents of Baybay Norte were also conducted to have a more comprehensive understanding of their migration history. Series of interviews and validations were held from February 2018 to May 2019.

Calatrava, Negros Occidental in the 1950s to 1990s: A Setting of Out-Migration

Ang kabuhi namon ridto daw galatay sa isa ka bilog nga lanot. Pigado. (Our life there [in Calatrava] was like walking on a thread. Life was difficult).

The statement above by Albino Pason, a fisher migrant, describes the life he and his family had in Brgy. San Isidro, Calatrava prior to moving in Miagao in 1972. His father, just like many other fishers at that time, used explosives in fishing to increase fish catch. He recounted that the use of explosives was initially rewarding but not in the later decades as fish catch started to shrink in size and volume alarmingly, making policemen more aggressive in nabbing the perpetrators including his father. *Pigado nga pangabubi* in Calatrava, which for fishers meant lower fish catch, lower income, and no better alternative livelihood to fishing, was a recurring theme in their motivation to migrate out of the town. Calatrava is located at 10°35'44" east latitude and 123°28'53" north longitude on the northeastern side of the province of Negros Occidental in Negros Island. It has a total land area of 32,196.98 ha. and is composed of forty barangays; fourteen of which have a coastline and the remaining twenty-six are mountain barangays.¹⁴ The population of Calatrava in 2015 had multiplied by a dozen since 1903, to 80,624 from 6,385, respectively. In 1970 and 1980, however, the town population was in negative. The trend further drew almost a plateau between 1975 and 1990. This numerical decline, although affected by fertility and mortality but the role of migration could not be totally ruled out as a factor.

Calatrava is mainly hilly with rough mountains, and some rolling and flat lands along its coastal plain. The rugged topography of the town limited its agricultural potential. In a soil survey published in 1951, the mountains of adjacent towns of Escalante, Toboso, Calatrava, and San Carlos City were "completely denuded of its native vegetation".¹⁵ Its soil type, faraoon clay, was described to have "more pebbles and cobbles of limestone than ...soils".¹⁶ Crops planted in these areas e.g. corn, banana, cassava, and upland rice were miserably small.¹⁷ In the narrow flat lowlands of the town, on the other hand, soil is mainly classified as hydrosols and obando sand. Hydrosols was "not

suited to crops” because of the presence of sea water during high tide.¹⁸ Obando sand, on the other hand, was “very poor in organic matter” and was weakly acidic. Areas with this type of soil were “seldom used for agricultural purposes”.¹⁹ Despite these geographical limitations, Calatrava remains as an agricultural town. Agricultural censuses from 1948 to 1991 revealed that corn, *palay* and sugarcane were the main valuable crops widely cultivated in Calatrava. Although corn is most expansive in terms of land area, it is sugarcane concentrated in the littoral plains of the town that has remained the principal agricultural industry of Calatrava.

Sugarcane cultivation in Calatrava started as early as 1910. In a report published in the same year, Calatrava, then a barrio of San Carlos, had sugar plantations extending “from the Hacienda Santo Tomas [in present day Barangay Buenavista, Calatrava] in the north to Valle Hermoso [San Carlos] in the south.”²⁰ However, until the breakout of the Second World War in the Philippines in 1941, Calatrava was best recognised for its production of corn, tobacco, *gabe*, and *ubi* rather than sugarcane.²¹ During the War, the Calatrava remained only as a “small town of no commercial importance” and its small barrios were “unimportant”.²² The post-War years showed an upscale trend in the size of farm lands devoted for sugarcane, growing significantly from 441 ha. in 1948 to 1,379.30 ha. in 1960 to 4,387.60 ha. in 1970. A map of the town in 1961 showed that there were eight sugar haciendas of which three were located in Barangay San Isidro. In 1980, however, its size shrank to almost half its size at 2,357 ha. Interestingly, of the total 129 farms reporting to cultivate sugarcane in 1980, only 63 per cent or 81 farms were planted with sugarcane exclusively while the remaining 37 per cent or 48 farms had other crops.²³ This number could be indicative that planters in town were diversifying their sources of income to cope up with the crisis in sugar following the end of Philippine-American free trade agreement in 1974 as there was no similar data in previous censuses.²⁴

Subsequently, employment opportunities in Calatrava's major industry dwindled. A study in 1989 surveyed the survival strategies of displaced sugarcane workers and identified migration as one of those. In the survey, some 77 per cent of the *pangayaos* or the transient sugarcane workers who moved from one hacienda to another, came from towns in northern Negros, specifically Calatrava, Cadiz City, and Manapla. On the other hand, the largest 15 per cent surveyed *duma-ans* or regular farm workers who reside permanently in the hacienda that employs them, also came from Calatrava. The study also revealed that 54 per cent of displaced sugarcane workers who chose to stay were predominantly skillful at fishing.²⁵ In Calatrava, the waters that bound the town make fishing a sensible livelihood option for them. The eastern side of the Calatrava is bounded by Tañon Strait. The Strait lies south of the Visayan Sea, and it separates the islands of Cebu and Negros. It is extremely narrow, 27 km wide, and 160 km long. Its deepest point is at 500 meters. Its coastline stretches at 450 km.²⁶ Evincing from *Fisheries Statistics Report* from 1960 to 1972, the following marine species were commonly caught in the Strait: anchovy, barracuda, big-eye scad, bonito, butterfly fish, cavalla, crab, herring, lizard fish,

mackerel, nemipterid, pampano, porgy, ray round scad, runner, sardine, shrimp, slipmouth, squid, swordfish, ten pounder, and tuna. Today, diamond back squid aside from tunas e.g. yellowfin, skipjack, bullet and frigate, are frequently caught in the Strait.²⁷ Among the pressing issues of Tañon Strait is overfishing. A historical look at the Strait revealed that high density of fishers, expansive commercial fishing, and dynamite fishing were among the major contributors to the problem. In 1987 Tañon Strait, specifically its northern and southern sections, were identified as heavily exploited waters in the country.²⁸ The waters under this category were characterised by a high density of more than 70 fishers/km. An important contributor to this could be the turning of some displaced sugarcane workers to fishing to survive the crisis in the sugar industry. Expansive commercial fishing and rampant use of destructive fishing were also among the major contributors to lower fish catch in the Strait. *Fisheries Statistics of the Philippines*, an annual statistical report published by the Bureau of Fisheries which became known as Philippine Fisheries Commission and later the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, revealed that as early as the 1950s, Tañon Strait had already been identified as one of the fishing grounds in the country frequented by commercial fishing vessels. In the annual reports of the Commission, bag net, purse seine, and otter trawl were the types of commercial fishing gears commonly used in the Strait. Table 1 shows the volume of fish catch in the Strait by commercial fishing vessels and by the kind of gears used from 1959 to 1972.²⁹ While the reports are not conclusive, nonetheless, they present evidence of commercial fishing operations in the narrow Tañon Strait to cause problems to its artisanal fishers.

Table 1: Volume of Production of Fish by Commercial Fishing Vessels and by Kind of Gear Used in Tañon Strait: 1959–1969, 1972

Year	Otter Trawl (Kg)	Bag Net (Kg)	Round Haul Seine (Kg)	Muro- Ami (Kg)	Purse Seine (Kg)	Beach Seine (Kg)	Fish Coral (Kg)
1959	37,050	330,850	-	-	27,980	-	-
1960	16,500	669,040	-	-	54,390	-	-
1961	17,790	270,600	9,420	-	59,490	-	-
1962	21,120	298,500	7,860	-	54,930	-	-
1963	11,310	130,920	14,670	-	559,470	-	-
1964	26,840	138,720	4,000	28,200	545,760	27,520	9,600
1965	28,160	20,040	40,040	-	169,800	-	-
1966	11,000	7,600	16,200	-	60,920	-	-
1967	-	20,640	17,520	-	35,480	-	-
1968	7,320	-	8,480	-	70,400	-	-
1969	-	4,400	-	-	3,600	-	-
1972	84,650	31,870	-	-	3,330	-	-

Source: *Fisheries Statistics of the Philippines*, 1959–1969, 1972

Commercial fishing in the Strait as in other adjacent Visayan waters intensified at the time of the sugar crisis in Negros as many sugar landlords ventured on fishing business to cope up with the crisis. In the words of Rolando Batusbatusan, the President of the Federation of Small Fishermen in Negros established in 1984, “former landlords... control much of commercial fishing...the fishing industry [became] an extension of the agricultural industry” of the landlords.³⁰ They owned trawlers and purse seines which could be exploitative and destructive when used in the 27km wide Strait. The Federation also believed that many of the trawlers fishing in the waters of northern Negros were owned and operated by the Japanese who were granted the fishing rights by the Philippine-Japan Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation in 1973.³¹ In effect, artisanal fishermen suffered to a very low fish catch. A fisherman in northern Negros once recalled that, “we used to have plenty of fish to eat..., since the trawlers came in, we have only crabs. Sometimes we don’t get anything at all.”³² Most of small fishermen in northern Negros used hook-and-line method. Because of their traditional way of fishing, they faced unfair competition from commercial vessels equipped with sonar and radar devices. Eric Gamalinda noted that “in 1960 the average catch was 20 kilos in two to four hours; today fishermen hardly catch four kilos. These conditions have encouraged subsistence fishermen to resort to illegal and often dangerous methods to compete with bigtime fishers.”³³

Blast fishing was a recurring problem in the Strait as it was all around the waters of Visayas since the 1950s. A graduate thesis submitted to the University of San Carlos in 1954 reported that dynamite fishing was all over the waters of Cebu. Through field observation and interviews with old time fishers of the island, the study found out that in the waters around the Bantayan Island in northern Tañon Strait: “1) only 35 [per cent] of the dynamited fish is retrieved by the unscrupulous fisherman, 2) schools of fish are destroyed, 3) their spawning period is altered, 4) most of the dynamited fish sink to the bottom of the sea, 5) some dynamited fish when eaten produce a certain form of skin disease. The powder used in this explosive is usually taken from the abandoned Japanese mines; 6) some fish that eat the unrecovered dynamited ones are poisoned; and, 7) food supplies of fish like plant and animal life are often destroyed by the blasts. In Northern Negros, the reefs off Sagay City were notorious for intense blast fishing.³⁴ Other target offshore areas in order of frequency were San Carlos City, Cadiz City, Manapla and Victorias.³⁵ Although not directly in the waters of Calatrava, the destruction caused by blast fishing in adjacent waters had a spill-over effect affecting the volume of fish catch of fishers in town. The compound effect of high density of fishers fishing in the Strait, expansive commercial fishing, and widespread blast fishing to the livelihood of artisanal fishers in Calatrava and in other neighboring towns was very low fish catch, very low income.

Life in Calatrava was made more difficult in the 1980s due to armed conflicts between bandit gangs and the Philippine Constabulary (PC) or state police. The *Visayan Daily Star*, a local newspaper based in Bacolod City, reported series of ambushes, killings, kidnapping, torture, and illegal taxation perpetuated

by four bandit gangs in towns and in neighboring municipalities of Toboso, Escalante, San Carlos, and Don Benedicto. These gangs professed no links with the New People's Army (NPA), a military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which was a real threat in southern Negros.³⁶ The crimes of these gangs brought them into armed conflicts with the PC.³⁷ The PC, however, were also alleged to have maltreated and harassed civilians in Calatrava.³⁸ It was not until 1986 that the bandits became cooperative with the government.³⁹ While reconciliation with the bandit gangs was underway, news of NPA's presence in northern Negros filled the local print media in the later years of the decade. In Calatrava, ambushes organised by the suspected NPA were reported in its hinterland barangays.⁴⁰ PC were deployed to destroy the dissidents. In effect, some civilians were forced to move out and in September 1989 more than 200 of residents of Minapasok were reported to evacuate the barangay "to avoid being caught in the crossfire in the gunbattle between 100 heavily armed New People's Army insurgents and the 334th PC soldiers."⁴¹

Low fish catch in Tañon Strait, lack of alternative livelihood to fishing due to sugar crisis and geographical limitations coupled with armed conflicts between dissidents and the state forces were among the major developments that made life particularly challenging in Calatrava between the 1950s and 1990s. In fact, in 1990, Calatrava was named among the "low income municipalities" of the province along with Murcia, Pontevedra, Sagay and La Castellana.⁴² *Pigado nga pangabuhì* in Calatrava was repeatedly complained by families of fisher migrants who left Barangay San Isidro in the past decades. As their income mainly depended on the amount of fish catch, fishers whined over its obvious decrease. Regino Simeon, who began fishing in his elementary years and left San Isidro in 1980s, estimated that he could bring home about 10kgs of fish after fishing for an hour or two in the 1960s. In the 1970s, the catch was hardly 5kgs, and almost nothing in the succeeding decades. If catch in the 1970s was at an average of 5kgs a day multiplied by 365 days in a year, annual fish catch of one fisherman in San Isidro would be at 1.83mt. In this decade, it was lower than the average annual productivity of individual fisher in the region at 1.94 mt.⁴³

Barangay San Isidro is located at 5.6km from the town proper, and 10.2km from San Carlos City. Due to the location, the fishers do not sell their catch in the public markets because transporting their fish would add up to the cost. Instead, women fishers would hand carry their buckets of fish covered in ice and peddled them to workers in the haciendas and folks in and outside San Isidro. Milagros Argoncillo, a fisher herself whose husband was a *duma-an* and who left the town in 1983, earned a living primarily from peddling fish in the barangay. It was typical for her fish to be exchanged with bananas and sweet potatoes because money was scarce, especially among the poverty stricken hacienda workers. With the outbreak of conflicts in town, Milagros could no longer peddle her fish in the upland barangays freely. The army would have her turned back for fear that she might be harmed on her way up. Milagros recalled how bad her family's situation was, especially when her husband's asthma got worsened and could not report to work, peddling of fish was also hard up. "*Sus!*

gutom-gutom gid mi... laka ra mi makakaon og kan-on nga bugas kay dili taynyon amoang pangita... daklit-daklit lang maglibod ka isda.. amo to pag-pigado gid,” (Sus! we were starving... rarely did my family eat rice because my income was disrupted...I could sell fish but only secretly... life was very difficult).⁴⁴

Hacienda work was not a better alternative to fishing. San Isidro is home to three sugarcane plantations. One would think working in plantations was the best substitute for fishing. For fishers who chose to leave the barangay, the seasonal unemployment in the industry i.e. plenty of work during the milling season and very little work during the off-milling season, promised no better chance. The seasonal unemployment, poor wages and dearth of social benefits in the hacienda work impoverished worker's living conditions characterised by the lack of education and deficient diet.⁴⁵ Leonora Luague, wife of a fisherman who left the barangay earlier in the 1960s, thought that fishers' income remained better than sugarcane workers' despite the woes in fishing. To Leonora, the hacienda workers had poor material condition. She described them empathically as “*makaluluoy. Ang shorts kara nga lusbot, ang lusbot tapakan pa guid... Sa ka pigado nga daw indi na sila ka bakal shorts... Ang tapakan nga shorts, tapakan pa gid nga daw puros na tapak*” (Pitiful. Their tattered shorts were sewn on a patch after the other. They were so destitute to not afford a new one).⁴⁶

The poor income from low-yield fishing and the apparent absence of livelihood prospects in the barangay encouraged a number of families to look for better chances outside. When a primary school teacher in San Isidro Elementary School named Clara Monsale needed a helper to work for her in Miagao, Eusebio Pason, a fisher whom the teacher befriended, presented her daughter, Milagros Pason. Clara, a *tumandok* or local of Miagao, went and stayed in Negros only to land a teaching job. Her service record retrieved from the files of the Division of Iloilo showed that she taught in Calatrava from August 16, 1950, to June 4, 1961, when she filed for her maternity leave for her first child. In 1962, she returned for a month to teach in Toboso but got transferred to the Division of Iloilo in August of the same year. The arrival of Milagros Pason in 1961 and her marriage to a local the following year would open a way for her family and families in her neighborhood to come to Miagao primarily to fish. Subsequently, their in-migration created a community of *Cebuano* speaking fisher migrants in Barangay Baybay Norte.

Miagao, Iloilo in the 1950s to 1990s: A Setting of In-Migration

Mag oras mag kuchichang aloy, pirte nga bulikanay. Kun-an ka nga daw wala gani isa ka oras sa lawod pauli na ka. Binanyera na! Daw ma kapan na lang na baroto mo. Baroto lang ginahulat mo magkarga, indi ang isda (When it's season of bullet tuna [in Miagao], bountiful fish were hauled. In less than an hour of fishing in the sea, I could go home. Fish crates were full. Boats seemed to tip over. It was like the fish waited for the boat to get hauled, not the other way around).

Maximo Pason

In the statement above Maximo, who came to Miagao in 1964, describes inshore fishing in town in the '60s to '80s. His coming to Miagao was primarily

a response to his Manang Milagros's excessive laudation of the bounty of fish in the new town. Together with his father Eusebio, his brother Sergio, and a neighbor Alberto Lopez, they travelled to literally test its water. "*Binanyera nga isda*," they exclaimed. Their neighborhood knew of their success during their return visits in San Isidro. Male fishers who got hooked by their stories considered trying out fishing in Miagao. They stayed from weeks to months. The abundance of fish gave them a high hope of "*taratanhay nga pangabuhì*" (a comfortable living). Soon after, their families followed. What started as weeks of fishing sojourn became long years of residence in town.

The Municipality of Miagao is located at 125°54'54" east longitude and 10°40'15" north latitude on the southwestern coast of the province in the First District of the province of Iloilo in Panay Island. It has a total land area of 15,680ha or 156.80sq.km. It is bounded by the town of Igaras on the north, Guimbal on the east, Sibalom, Antique on the far west, San Joaquin on the southwest, and Panay Gulf on the south. The town is composed of 119 barangays; 8 of these barangays constitute the poblacion which can be divided into three main sections, Baybay (Baybay Norte, Baybay Sur, Bolho, and Sapa), Tacas (Mat-y, and Tacas), and Ubos (Ubos Ilawod, and Ubos Ilaya). Of the 119 barangays, 22 have a coastline stretching to a total of 16km. The coastal waters of the town form a part of the northern Panay Gulf. These coastal waters are clear of dangers as there are neither reefs nor shoals which are hazardous for large vessels.⁴⁷ Similar to Tañon Strait, Panay Gulf had been one of the major fishing grounds in the Philippines frequented by commercial vessels. In the reports of the Fisheries Philippine Commission, commercial fishing vessels such as otter trawl and bag net had been operating and frequenting the Panay Gulf as early as 1959. Purse seine fishery, on the other hand, began to appear at least on records in 1967.

Table 2: Productivity of Panay Gulf by Commercial Fishing Vessels Per Year, 1953-1969, 1972, and 1977

Year	Kilograms	Year	Kilograms
1953	1,226,268	1963	84,000
1954	2,547,115	1964	249,400
1955	2,642,256	1965	629,080
1956	2,393,823	1966	571,960
1957	783,606	1967	987,800
1958	499,578	1968	190,840
1959	884,760	1969	408,200
1960	707,870	1972	700,560
1961	1,146,420	1977	2,712,000
1962	648,060		

Source: *Fisheries Statistics of the Philippines*, 1954, 1956, 1958-1969, 1972, 1977

In comparison with Tañon Strait, the numbers hint that Panay Gulf was generally more productive. This is likely especially that the Panay Gulf lies northeast of a wider Sulu Sea. The water southwest of Panay was also a migration route of valuable fishes particularly skipjack and yellowfin tuna.⁴⁸ Local fishers in nearby coasts recalled that Miagao was plentiful of fish specifically *aloy* (bullet tuna), *panit* and *bantala-an* (yellowfin tuna), and *barilis* (skipjack). These fish were caught inshore about thirty meters from the shoreline using inexpensive traditional fishing gears namely hook and line, fish net, and rowboats. Fishing was not costly, so income was guaranteed. People remembered that during the *tag-araloy* or season of *aloy* in November to March–May, fish was superabundant that some were left to rot on the shore or dump beside the river. *Basnigan* (motorised fishing boats) from *aminban* or northern Iloilo sojourned in town until March–April yearly. “*Daw pista ang dagat. Pirte daghana ang baroto*” (it seemed like a festival at sea. There were too many boats).⁴⁹

Fisher migrants estimated that a *banyera* of fish weighed 30–40kg. This volume of catch continued until the ‘90s. In the later decades, however, fishers observed that their fish catch was decreasing in volume. They believed that *kubkuban* or purse seines owned by a local of Miagao have depleted the fish inshore. Vicenta Tawani, who came in 1977, described the fishers’ plight figuratively saying, “*gabambal ang mananagat nga gagmay ano ra kay wara run ti sungi mong. Wara run ti sungi bay nga isda nga mahulik. Ubos gid sa lambat mong*” (the small fishermen are saying that even fish with cleft lip with has no escape from the massive purse seines). Although this expression may be an exaggeration, nonetheless, it is telling of how bad the situation of small-scale fishermen like her husband used to catch fish unhooked by large fishing boats. However, in recent decades, purse seines have hauled all fish barely leaving a few to them. The dwindling inshore fishing compelled them to adopt pump boats and fish outside the municipal water of Miagao as far as the waters facing Antique, Cuyo Island, and in recent years, Zamboanga peninsula. The wealth of fish which caused a neighborhood of fishers in San Isidro to migrate in Miagao was gradually shrinking. Despite this dismay, they chose to stay. The progress of town and the proximity of their new residence to what are essential to them were crucial in their decision not to leave Miagao.

History of Miagao (1716-1979) written and published by Elias Failagao in 1979 narrated the “rich culture and glorious past” of the town.⁵⁰ During the American colonial years, Miagao was already a high income municipality. Its net income of PHP20,333.86 in 1933 and PHP18,661.97 in 1935 classified the town as a second-class municipality.⁵¹ Its income principally came from its major industries including farming, especially of *palay*, fishing, salt-making, and weaving. Other income was sourced from small businesses and industrial products produced in town. In 1937, Miagao had a total of 55 sari-sari stores, all owned by Filipinos. Its industrial products included “*patadiong* or *tapis*, *sinamay*, mosquito nets, *piñatex*, *abatex*, *jusi*, *jusitex*, *barabara*, *sadoc*, *buri* mats, leather slippers, *tabungos*, *malindog*, *swali*, bolos, axes and *guinamos*”.⁵² Also, the town was a trade center in southern Panay where merchants from other towns converged to trade goods especially during its market day on Saturday. Before

the outbreak of war, Miagao was reclassified as a first-class municipality. With an annual income amounting to PHP50,000, Miagao was the third among other towns in the province with the highest tax collection, outranked only by Janiuary and Pototan.⁵³ During the war, however, economic activities were disrupted. Many of the town's commercial establishments closed. This reduced the town's annual income to PHP30,399.69 in 1946, downgrading its status to a fourth-class municipality. The recovery of Miagao from the war did not come immediately. From 1963 to 1978, the town's annual income was rising, suggesting the revival and proliferation of businesses in town. In 1971, Miagao recorded at least 563 commercial establishments, the second most numerous among the thirty other towns surveyed for electrification projects outside of Iloilo City. The town remained primarily agricultural but other important industries were fishing, copra making, cattle raising, and salt making.⁵⁴ By the late 1970s, "Miagao believed to be self-sufficient in rice".⁵⁵ Handloom weaving produced *patadyong*, mosquito nets, and *hablon* that earned the town its popularity.

Improvements in town were crucial in the decision of the migrants to stay. Because of the influx of people, the fishers believed there would be greater demand for their fish. Barangay Baybay Norte, where majority of them reside in Miagao, is walkable distance to the town's public market, commercial establishments, health services, and other essential institutions like schools. Transporting their catch to sell in the market and around poblacion did not require large costs. They did not incur transportation costs/fare to buying their essentials or for sending their children to school. Vicenta and her husband Jeluiz articulated this reasoning in an interview saying "*nag boom ang Miagao, 1980s plastado run ang UP in the Visayas sa Miagao. 80 pa babaw... amat-mat ikbo ang tawo. Sang una wala man manindaban kung hapon ukon, aga man lang, tapos tulad nga 80s pataas na aga hapon ang mga tawo*" (Miagao prospered in 1980s when UP Visayas rose in town. More people were coming in. Before, people would come to market only in the morning. When UP came, people would crowd the market both in the morning and afternoon). Vicenta added that she has not regretted her family's decision not to return to San Isidro because "*number one guid nga ang mga bata ko indi mga ignorante kay wara ka iskuela. Bisan high school grad lang sila, pero naka high school, makaintsindi. Kung ridto, hindi guid na ka high school. Manghilamon guid sa kampo,*" (the foremost reason is our children were able to attend school and are not ignorant. They completed high school and they have discernment. If we came back to San Isidro, surely none of them attended high school. They could have been strained working in the hacienda).⁵⁶

"*Hulas pa sa linugan*" (easier than making porridge), Maximo analogously described his living in Baybay Norte. Although he was not a local of the place, he felt no alienation. On the contrary, *tumandok* helped him make a living in Miagao. Rufo Muzones, a *tumandok* and uncle-in-law of his Manang Milagros, offered him and three others (father Eusebio, brother Sergio, and neighbor Alberto) a boat and gears to use in fishing. He became their *amo* (patron) to whom they shared income from fishing. In times of distress, it was their *amo* who lent them advances. He felt fortunate to have an *amo* who was

kind. Another *tumandok*, a bachelor teacher Ramon Lamberto, offered them his untenanted *kamalig*. Enhanced with *palayas* (extended roofing), this *kamalig* became the temporary shelter that housed many sojourners and their families on their first visit to town. They were packed in a house of familiar faces, assisting each other until each family was able to put up their own house nearby. Subsequently, the migrant fishers grew in numbers, from one *kamalig* to a community of *Sebuano* speaking households at Zone 6, Baybay Norte. Their population is high enough to earn its appellation as “*lugar kang mga Sebuano*” (place of Sebuano). Others reside in adjacent coastal barangays, namely Baybay Sur, Guibongan, Kirayan Sur, and Sapa. At the time of interview in the first quarter of 2018, the total number of households whose head of household and/or the spouse came from Calatrava in Miagao accounted to 78. They spread in five adjoining coastal barangays of Miagao: Baybay Norte (44), Baybay Sur (3), Guibongan (16), Kirayan Sur (4), and Sapa (11).

Although they speak *Sebuano* and could not understand *Kinaray-a*, the language difference did not cause major trouble to fishers. They spent their nights fishing and days resting. Interacting with *tumandok* was minimal. However, their wives who were principally tasked to sell their catch had to deal with *tumandok*. As newcomers in town who barely knew the place and understood the local language, it was a major concern. Sales and income depended on how well they speak the language of their prospective buyers. Vicenta apprehensively spoke how serious it was. In her words, “*Ginoo ko! Sa lugar nga dili ko kabalo mag K[in]aray-a, unsaon ko? May kalag ka? Kung may kalag ka, buligi man ko kay di pa bala ko kabalo mag K[in]aray-a. Sa uban nga mga binarangay, dalum anda Kinaray-a to,*” (Oh God! In a place where I do not understand *Kinaray-a*, what should I do? Do you have a soul? If you have, help me learn the language. In far-flung barangays they spoke deep *Kinaray-a*). Eventually, she learned and acquired the language but like most of the primary migrants, they continue to speak *Sebuano* especially among themselves.

Effects of Fishers' In-Migration to Artisanal Fishing Knowledge in Miagao

Ang sila diri, ang taga, gamay lang gid... Nagsunod lang na samon panagat kay wala na sila naman-an diri panagat mong... Isa lang ka bilog taga nanda. Isa lang, bunit lang. Ang amon to, tag-duma ka putos kag sang ka putos nga 200 ka taga. Pag abot namon diri, amo to nakabalo na sila nga amo panguba sang isda,” (the local fishers used only a few hooks. They copied our way of fishing because their fishing was inadequate. Their fishing line only had one hook locally known as *bunit*. Ours, on the other hand, we used two boxes of hooks of 200 each. When we came in, they imitated our way of fishing and that was when they learned how to fish more productively), said Regino Simeon who sojourned to fish in Miagao in the '70 and permanently resided in early 1980s. The migration of fishers from San Isidro, Calatrava to Miagao was primarily motivated by fishing. Many of their sons, likewise, became like them and their daughters married a fisher. Although some tried other work, carpentry being the most common, it never replaced

fishing as their principal source of income. Thus, if fishers' in-migration has any significant effect on the locality, it would in their pursuit of this livelihood.

In fishing, they employed similar technology they had used in San Isidro. Hook and line, and rowboats. The migrant fishers described that the most common fishing gear that the local fishermen used in the year of their arrival was a traditional hook and line, similar to what they used in the waters of San Isidro. It has several variations but the commonly used are *bunit* with one hook, and *into-intu* with about 10-50 hooks. In Cebuano, *into-intu* is called *bundak-bundak*. However, the migrants' *diskarte* or ingenious style was they multiplied the hooks into hundreds. This enabled them to catch more fish, particularly bullet tuna to the envy of the locals. The use of hundreds of hooks in *into-intu* is believed by migrants to be introduced by them in Miagao. Gerry Amolo who migrated in 1979 and Regino Simeon in 1982 recalled that local fishermen sought help from them to make *bundak-bundak*. Regino said, "*nagsunod lang na sa'mon panagat..., bundak-bundak. Isa lang ka bilog taga nanda. Isa lang, bunit lang. Ang amon to, tag-duwa ka putos. Sang ka putos nga 200 ka taga. Pag-abot namon diri, amo to nakahibalo na sila nga amo panguba sang isda.*"⁵⁷ (The local fishers of Miagao simply followed our style of fishing..., *bundak-bundak*. They used only 1 hook to catch fish. Ours, on the other hand, we used 2 boxes for each line. One box is equivalent to 200 fishhooks).



Photo 1: *Bundak-Bundak* or *Into-Intu* made by Wilfredo Palabrica. In this photo, there are about 20–30 hooks. ©Author, February 16, 2018.

Gunzo Kawamura and Teodora Bagarinao noted that by the 1980s, *intu-intu* or *sibid* was already popular around in Panay. It “is operated vertically and hauled many times, in daytime. Fishermen use a certain white synthetic fiber which they tie to the hooks with red-colored thread. Underwater, the white fibers looked light-violet; together with the red binding at one end, the net effect is, according to the fishermen, that of a shrimp or similar organism, moving through the water and very attractive to fishes. This line is usually operated

from a small non-motorized boat. Sometimes, feathers are attached to the hooks together with the synthetic fibers.”⁵⁸ In Calatrava, it was common among the artisanal fishermen to dive into the water or *panalum* to catch fish in the reefs. Despite exhausting, it was deemed most effective method especially that Tañon Strait is characterised by reefs. Waters of Panay Gulf, on the other hand, are clear of reefs, thus, dart fishing is not a common practice in the area. However, a few of the migrants have used *pana* in their fishing in the waters offshore of Miagao. None of the locals followed the migrants in their *panalum*.



Photo 2: *Pana* or fish dart used by Remlani Tawani, brother of Jeluiz Tawani. ©Author May 26, 2018

Another important fishing gear that migrant fishers introduced in town is called *pang-nocos* or *angkela* in Sebuano or *kamil* in Kinaray-a or squid jig in English. Tañon Strait is abundant of pelagic squid that made fishers in the area expert in squid hunting. The migrants introduced *angkela* to local fishermen in the town. It is made of stainless tin rod carefully formed like an inverted umbrella and each sharpened spike measures 1–1¼". Assembling the spikes was a tedious and dangerous process that none of the *Karay-a* acquired the skill. In the early decades, the father of Jeluiz Tawani was among the few dealers that made squid jigs in Miagao. Today, squid jigs could be bought in the market. In catching squid, migrant fishers use bait and light. The migrants claimed to have been the first to use *ata* or squid ink as bait in Miagao fisheries. It proved to be very effective in that the local fishers followed soon. Also, they used to attract their prey using *stringki*, an improvised kerosene lamp that could cast greater light than the local *kingki* which is its smaller version. Sometime in the 1970s and 1980s, they began using *petromax*. It could be bought in the market. However, it could only carry small amount of gas for light. The *diskarte* of the migrant fishers was to combine two to make a bigger container for the gas. To their amusement, locals soon adopted these methods but never made them on their own. Sometime in early 2000, the migrant fishers, particularly the Para-asi family from Cebu with matriarchal roots are in San Isidro, Calatrava, introduced the *igpat-igpat* or blinker. It was popularly used in Cebu which was brought in Miagao after one member of the Para-asi family had a vacation in the province. *Igpat-igpat* is manually put inside the unused syringe and attached close to the squid jig. The syringe protects the blinker from getting wet, otherwise, it would not lit. It has replaced *stringki* and *petromax* and proved to be much more efficient.



Photo 3: *Stringki* (left) and *petromax* (right) used for squid hunting. The *stringki* is owned by Remlani Tawani while the *petromax* by Lydia Dayondon. ©Author, April 15, 2018.

Other fishing gears commonly used by migrant fishers include *buga-buga*, *biwihin*, *labay*, *pakaway*, *palagnas*, *palaran*, and *pang-dorado*. All of these fall under the category of hook and line. First generation migrants learned the crafting of these gears even before they moved in Miagao; their children had learned from them. The migrants, unlike the locals, have not used big nets because it is costly. It is important to note that until early 1990s, majority of migrant fishers as well as local fishermen in Miagao used only *baroto* in their fishing. Concurring from the migrants, very few Miagaowanon owned *pamboat* (pump boat) in the 1960s and 1970s. They made two references, Ruppo Muzones, and the family of Clara Monsale Montealto. By the late 1980s, still a few owned a *pamboat* but migrant fishers were beginning to own it such as Lodovico Abalos, Arturo Luague, and Eduardo Dayondon. Majority had not shifted to motorised fishing crafts until the late 1990s because of the cost of motor and fuel. In the late 1990s, majority of migrant fishers were already owning a *pamboat*. By the early 2000s, one could hardly see a *baroto* resting on the shores. There have been changes in the sizes and physical appearance of fishing boats used by the migrants.

The migrants adopted *pamboat* because fishes were no longer abound the municipal waters of Miagao and they blamed this to the operation of highly mechanised commercial fishing within or just outside the 15km municipal waters. Also, the increasing needs of their growing families were pressing them to venture to other grounds especially during the lean months, from April to September. They have to fish outside the coastal waters, otherwise, they would starve. Till early 1990s, they could still yield this amount of fish but with more time needed. It was only during the later years of that decade when fish catch from the coastal waters were becoming mere subsistence. *Kotsitsa kang aloy* is yearly but as years passed by, fish catch even during this season is becoming less and less. Active fishers in the Baybay Norte blamed it to overfishing that was worsened by the entry of commercial fishing vessels in early 2000. To cope with the slackening fish near the shore, the local fishermen shifted to pump

boats to allow them to fish beyond the coastal waters. Unlike in earlier decades, by the 1990s, it was not uncommon for fishermen in Miagao to fish in other grounds. They frequented the waters facing Antique. In recent years, others would go as far as the waters surrounding Cuyo and Cagayancillo of Palawan and Zamboanga.

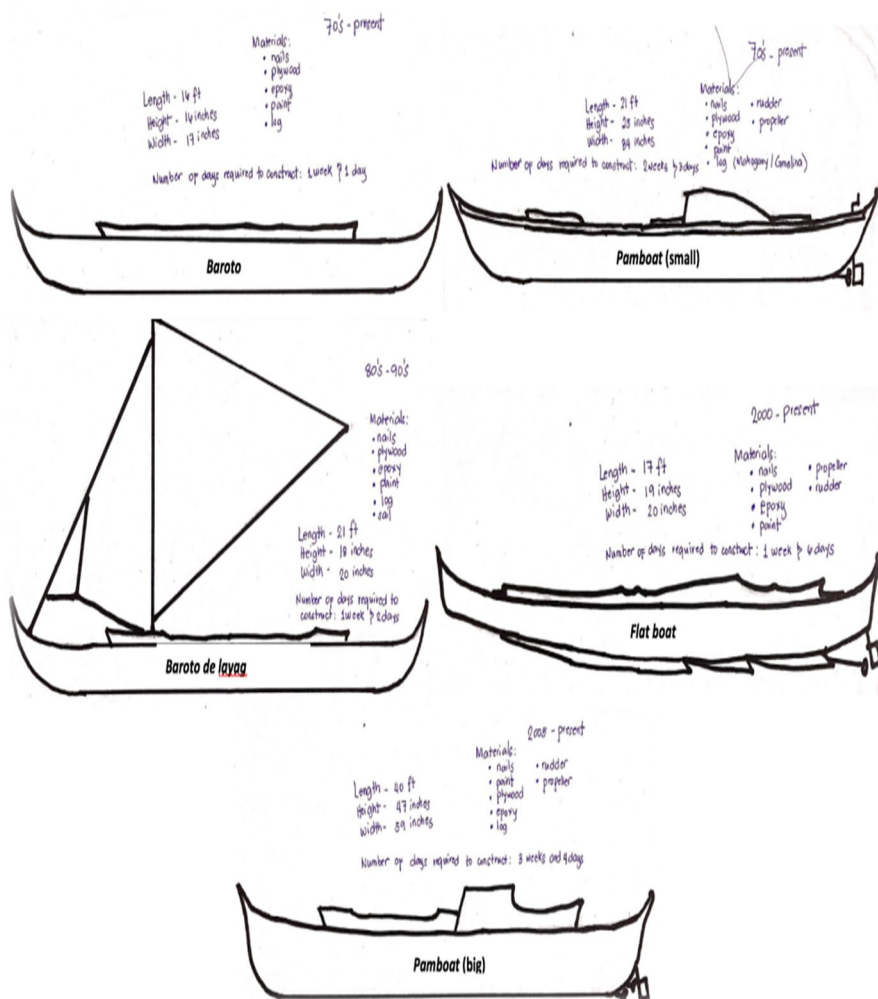


Figure 1: Illustration of different fishing boats used by the *mananagat* in Miagao through time. ©Monrey A. Tawani, April 21, 2018.

Most of the migrant fishers built their own *baroto* and/or *pamboat* using their own labour. But those who lack the skill contract labor of skilled boat-builder, but they provide the materials. Eduardo Dayondon and Remlani Tawani are among the few skilled boat builders in Baybay Norte who have made it a major source of income after fishing. Most of their clients are *tumandok* of the town, others are from neighboring towns like San Joaquin and Guimbal.

They learned the art of boat building by observing their elders in their youthful years.

Conclusion

The migration history of *mananagat* from Calatrava to Miagao from 1961 to 1995 presents a story of fisher's resilience to poverty that inherently characterised their way of living. The dwindling fish catch in northern Tañon Strait due to exploitative commercial and dynamite fishing, the sugar crisis in the '70s and poverty in hacienda work, the lack of livelihood alternatives due to town's rugged landscape, and the disruption of work caused by the presence of dissidents (bandit gangs and the NPAs) and encounter with the police, were among the major developments that had made life difficult for these fishers in Calatrava. As a survival strategy, the fishers adopted migration to Miagao following a chain migration, from the members of immediate family to families in the neighborhood. The success of their fishing sojourn, the economic and institutional developments, and the essential support from the locals and among themselves helped these fishers adjust and adapt in their new place in Miagao where they have built a community.

Notes

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