

The Non-Christian Tagalogs in Rizal Province

By

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The so-called Remontados who inhabit the mountains about Tanay, Montalban, and Antipolo, in Rizal Province, are among the most interesting types in the Philippines. According to the report of Mr. Claro Samonte, head of the branch office at Tanay of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, they numbered 3,387, as of December, 1933, marking an increase of 72 over the figure for the preceding year.

The word *remontado* is from the Spanish and refers to one who has fled to the mountains. Other names given to these people are *Vagos* (vagrants) and *Nomados*. According to tradition, the Remontados of Rizal are descended from a group of Tagalogs who ran away from the towns of San Mateo and Tanay to escape the demands for labor and tribute of the Spaniards, but others claim that they are descended from lowland dwellers who were driven into the mountains by the Spaniards at an earlier date. There are also those who say that these people are descended from outlaw elements from Montalban and Tanay. The long association of these "wild" and Non-Christian Tagalogs with the Negritos of the region has led to intermarriage, and some of the Remontados are therefore of a darker color than the others and have kinky hair. They are in many respects comparable to the Bukidnons of Negros Oriental, who escaped conversion when the Islands were Christianized, and to the Babailans of Panay and the Pulahans of Samar.

The Remontados of Rizal, though well built and muscular, are an indolent people, averse to regular work, and depending mainly upon the bounties of nature for a livelihood. They are expert hunters and use traps—the *balais* and the *pasolo*, bows

and arrows, a small spear (*salapang*) and dogs. Their best hunters are often used as guides by lowland hunters who find them faithful as well as valuable and pay them liberal fees. Wild pigs and deer are the usual game and also the *labuyo* or wild chicken. The young *labuyo* are sometimes domesticated.

Fishing comes second in importance—carried on not only by means of bow and arrow, the spear, hook and line, and the net, but with the hands, and also by *pakati*, i.e., artificially emptying a stream, and by poisoning the water with the seeds of the *Macaysa*. When traveling, the Remontados (or rather their women) carry rice with them. At meal time they cut down a bamboo and use a length of it to cook their rice in. They always camp near a stream and the women will drive the milk fish (*dalag*) out of their holes with their hands while the men stand ready to spear them as they come into view. They cook and eat what they can of the fish, and preserve what is left over by sprinkling salt over it.

At present there are many Remontados who have their own farms—*kaingin* or clearings in the forest. They plant rice, bananas, camotes, papayas and some other crops. Some of them are already using carabaos and wooden plows in the cultivation of their lands.

Christianity is also making headway among them. Many of them come to annual town fiestas and attend mass and consent to the baptism of their children. These "heathen" Tagalogs also come to town during other religious festivals and join in the processions. There is now also some inter-marriage between them and the Christian town-dwellers.

The Remontados speak Tagalog, and even those who are not baptized have Christian names, except the Dumagats among them who have their own names. Such names as Felix Santa Ana, Bruno de la Cruz, Felipe Francisco, Arsenio de Jesus, and Melecio de la Sada are common. Some Dumagat names are Dokinin, Yumanam, Malakas, Ganda, and Lintik.

Polygamy is still practised by them, especially by those who do not come in contact with the Christian population. Some of those who have been Christianized have given up all but one of their wives. The marriage rites are simple. The parents come to an agreement as to the dowry, a *salo-salo* or eating together of the elders, the young couple, and a few

friends, is held, and the two are considered married.

The eldest child of the first wife inherits the property of the father. The birth of a child is marked by a simple ceremony—it is sprinkled with water, fed a little salt, and given a name. The ceremony is similar to the Catholic baptism, but whether it is an imitation of this can not be told by the oldest men or women.

Death is solemnized by a common prayer on the part of the entire family of the deceased. After the burial, a *salosalo* is held for four consecutive nights in the house of the bereaved family accompanied by prayers for the departed. On the last night food is served in greater abundance, after which some of the members of the family and their friends dance the "Dance of Death" which resembles the *fandango*. They dance to the music of the guitar and various bamboo instruments, sometimes inviting musicians from the nearest municipality to take part. The more affluent wear black clothing as a sign of mourning.

The *Remontados* celebrate a thanksgiving just before the harvest, but only when the harvest promises to be good. If the crops are poor no gratitude is shown. After a bountiful harvest another fest is held. The people eat together, sing and dance a weird dance. Everybody is invited and is welcome to share in the feasting and merriment, as they believe this hospitality will insure an equally good harvest the next year.

The *Remontados*, especially those who come in contact with the lowlanders, are beginning to appreciate the value of schooling. Mr. Samote, the superintendent of the *Remontados*, has induced over fifty children to enroll in private schools in *Tanay*, and the people themselves are beginning to clamor for government schools for their children.

They have recently been somewhat worried by the appearance of gold prospectors in the region, fearing they may lose their landholdings and improvements, but the superintendent has been able to reassure them.

They are a peaceful and hospitable people—not savages, although they are conspicuous for always wearing their *bolos* wherever they go. Even the children have big knives hanging from their belts. They travel about a good deal and think nothing of sleeping by the wayside on a bed of leaves. Some of their minor pursuits engaged in to make money to buy things

sold in the towns, are selling whole or split rattan, gogo, almaciga, bamboo tubes, tree bark for dyeing, buho, orchids and other ornamental forest plants, etc. Hammocks and baskets woven from split rattan by the women are also brought to town to be sold or bartered for things they need. Sometimes they take vegetables, poultry, and even cattle to market. Some of the well-to-do Remontados are paying taxes to the Government. They live in *barangays*, but do not acknowledge any one among them whose will serves as the law. But in spite of the fact that they have no chiefs and no police, crimes are rarely committed. Such few disputes as arise are amicably settled by the Non-Christian Tribes office at Tanay. Minor troubles are settled by the elders.

The Remontados are gradually changing over from a semi-nomadic to a settled life. They are not very different from other Filipinos living in remote places, untouched by education. They are, sad to say, largely a "forgotten people." They are the one class of Non-Christians in the Philippines who receive very little help from the Government. There is no reason at all why the Province of Rizal should not be proud of these people. More should be done for them.

Population Statistics of the Remontados, Rizal Province (1934)

Settlement	Male	Female	Total
Macabod, Montalban	43	30	73
Anginon, Montalban	50	42	92
Locutan, Montalban	26	18	44
Puray, Montalban	54	46	100
Malacia, Montalban	30	26	56
Mabolo, Montalban	56	43	99
Macasabobo, Montalban	28	25	53
Kaymaslan, Montalban	36	26	62
Cabooan, Montalban	41	31	72
Santa Inez, Antipolo	172	115	287
Sampaloc, Tanay	132	121	253
Daraitan, Tanay	123	99	222
Layban, Tanay	125	132	257
Mamuyao, Tanay	121	92	213
Tinukan, Tanay	62	47	109
San Andres, Tanay	156	149	305
			3,387

The figures for Locutan, Macasabobo, and Maymaslan include a number of Dumagats and some others are scattered among the settlements of Santa Inez, Daraitan, and Layban.

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