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## Communist Insurgency in Manticao, 1980-1986

Janine S. Patilano, and Cecilia B. Tangian

### ABSTRACT

This study re-examines the history of the NPA in Manticao in 1980 to 1986. It specifically determines the factors that influenced both its formation and demise in 1986. Thirty (30) NPA returnees served as key informants of the study. They were gathered through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. In addition, the data of the study was gathered through in-depth interviews and Key Informant Interviews (KII). The findings of the study revealed that in 1980, FGU12, a NPA unit was established in Manticao. Its formation in the municipality was motivated by a Catholic priest of Irish descent. The growth of its members was influenced by the constant lectures or recruitment by one of his students, 'ka Mario. Moreover, the military abuses in the municipality and fear from both the military and the NPA added to its growth. In the succeeding years, the members of the NPA in Manticao tremendously grew. In the latter part of 1980s, the CPP-NPA launched "Operasyon Ahos", the anti-infiltration purge campaign against the suspected Deep Penetration Agents (DPAs) of the party. Finally, the campaign resulted in the massive death of its members all over the Philippines which resulted to their surrender.

### KEYWORDS

Communism,  
Communist  
Insurgency,  
Manticao,  
CPP-NPA,  
Martial Law

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## INTRODUCTION

On 8 June 2023 two (2) members of the Communist Terrorist Group-New People's Army (CTG-NPA) surrendered in the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Manticao. Their surrender was the pioneering movement in the municipality. The current mayor of the municipality, Stephen Tan in partnership with the 2nd Mechanized Infantry Brigade and 4th Mechanized Infantry Battalion, held a ceremonial surrender of the said NPAs. In the ceremony, the rebels surrendered their armed possessions such as: two (2) M16 rifles alongside six (6) short magazine steel, sixty-seven (67) live rounds of ammo, and two (2) bandoleers (Bautista, 2023).

In retrospect, during the administration of president Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) re-emerged under the leadership of Jose Maria Sison. He officially established the party on 26 December 1968 while its armed-wing, the New People's Army (NPA) was created on 29 March 1969. Consequently, when Marcos Sr. proclaimed the Philippines under Martial Law, the members of the NPA proliferated all over the Philippines. While in the post EDSA People Power Revolution, numerous members of the communist group surrendered to the government authorities (Yuson, 2021).

The declaration of president Ferdinand Marcos Sr. placing the entire Philippines under Martial Law on 21 September 1972, disrupted the peace and order in Manticao. It was fear from military and NPA besieged the residents of the municipality. Few of them consequently become members of the communist group. The NPA in Manticao during the Martial Law years garrisoned in the highlands of the municipality due to its geographically strategic advantage. In particular, two (2) of the independent cities of Northern Mindanao, Cagayan de Oro City and Iligan City are accessible from the highlands of Manticao. The former can be reached by traversing the uplands of Barangay Balintad while the latter through Barangay Digkilaan. Encampment and coordination is feasible in Manticao which seemingly make it a "breeding ground" for the NPA. Meanwhile, when president Corazon Aquino won the election, a few members of the communist group surrendered which led to the eventual decline of the communist group (INM2).

The undergraduate thesis study of M. Ratunil, "*Naratibong Hisgutan Kabahin sa Kasinatian: Manticao, Misamis Oriental from 1980-1986*" claimed that the formation of the NPA in Manticao was motivated by Martial Law through the abuses of the military and poverty, fear, and significantly a "hope for change" in the Philippine government. While its demise was influenced by the victory of president Corazon Aquino as the new president of the Philippines and the restoration of democracy in the country (Ratunil, 2019). However, this study claims that the formation in of the NPA in Manticao was mainly influenced by the Catholic Church while its decline was caused by the *Kampanyang Ahas*, the anti-infiltration purge campaign of the CPP-NPA itself. Hence, this study aims to provide new perspectives about communism in the Philippines through a re-

examination of the history of the NPA in Manticao. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How did the New People's Army in Manticao begin?
2. How did the communist group conduct their operations?
3. How did the New People's Army in Manticao end?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Communism in the Philippines had its beginning in the 1930s. To understand the context of this period, it is better to turn to the study of R. Galang, *"A Brief History of the Philippine Communist Movement"*. The study traces the rise of communism in the Philippines. It further claims that communism in the Philippines is an offshoot of its economic development. Accordingly, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Philippines, the country began experiencing massive agricultural and economic change. With the rapid industrialization in Europe and North America as well as the advances in transportation via steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal, the demand for tropical products such as coffee, sugar, tin, rubber, palm oil, and among others rapidly increased. Hence, the Philippine economy slowly transitioned from that of a subsistence to an agricultural exporter (Galang, 2012).

In addition, the study mentioned that under the American Occupation in the Philippines, the Filipinos who had been exiled to Spain returned. These Filipino returnees paved the way to the entry of socialist ideas in the Philippines. For example, in 1901, Isabelo de los Reyes who was deported to Barcelona returned to the Philippines. In Barcelona, he became acquainted with Marxist ideas which inspired him to organize the *Union Obrera Democratoca* (UOD), the first labor federation in the country. With the arrest of de los Reyes, UOD was reorganized into *Union Obrera Democratica de Filipinas* (UODF) which was later reorganized as *Congreso Obrero de Filipinas* (COF) by Hermenegildo Cruz and Crisanto Evangelista. In 1919, Evangelista was tasked to represent labor by the Nacionalistas in the first independence mission sent to the United States. In this event, he was able to attend the convention of the militant Industrial Workers of the World. With the growing exposure to the global communist movement, the labor unions had its radical turn. In 1925, Antonino Ora and Crisanto Evangelista officially launched the *Partido Obrero*, a political party which labeled the *Nacionalistas* as being tools of American imperialism and labor oppression. Meanwhile, in 1929, the members of the COF were split between the moderate and radical factions. Part of the latter was the left-wing, *Katipunan ng mga Anakpawis sa Pilipinas* (KAP) led by Crisanto Evangelista, Jacinto Manahan, and Juan Feleo. In August of 1930, these three (3) KAP leaders organized the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP), taking the extreme position for the establishment of the Soviet in the Philippines (Galang, 2012).

When communism reached the Philippines, the former president of the country like Ramon Magsaysay, Ferdinand Marcos Sr., and Corazon “Cory” Aquino crafted several policies to curtail and eventually obliterate the issue. In the case of Ramon Magsaysay and Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the study of M. Danguilan, *“Bullets and Bandages: Public Health as a Tool of Engagement in the Philippines”* explored their counterinsurgency programs which revolved on Civil Military Operations (CMOs). The study claimed that bullets and bombs are not the only anti-insurgency strategy. To win over the “hearts and minds of the people” through CMOs is one of the bloodless counterinsurgency programs of the AFP. During the administration of Ramon Magsaysay, the president developed a two-pronged approach to the Huk Rebellion. Magsaysay established the Office of Psychological Warfare. The office became the center for crafting strategies using civic action to counteract the Huks. On top of that, in Central Luzon which was the haven of the Huks, Magsaysay constructed irrigation canals, established credit facilities for farmers, and settled their land disputes. On top of that, Magsaysay established the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) which allowed the Huk surrenderees to acquire a homestead land in Mindanao. In return, the study claimed that Magsaysay’s civic action programs substantially contributed to quelling the Huk rebellion (Danguihan, 1999).

On the other hand, the study revealed that during the administration of Marcos Sr., the president dealt with communist insurgency through militarization and secondarily through CMOs. In fact, Marcos Sr. created the AFP Home-Defense program which provided complementary action to security operations while supporting national development programs. The main objective of the program was to persuade the people to support and accept the military as partners in nation-building. However, the CMOs under Marcos Sr. did not succeed due primarily to his imposition of Martial Law. When Martial Law was declared by Marcos Sr. he lost his legitimacy as his presidency was unconstitutional. Consequently, he had to have the AFP solidly behind him. Therefore, the AFP’s leadership and their capability to perform its military missions and to guarantee national security and independence was undermined. The study concluded that the use of CMOs as counterinsurgency raises certain issues which include the conditions under which CMOs are applied, the inability of CMOs to offer real options, and their sustainability and coverage which are dependent on the policies of the president in power (Danguihan, 1999).

In addition, the doctoral thesis of L. Pena, *“Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy”* analyzes the current Philippine counterinsurgency strategy specifically the “All Out Force” program of Ramon Magsaysay against the Huk Rebellion, the “*Oplan Katatagan*” during the Martial Law era under Ferdinand Marcos Sr, and the “*Lambat-Bitag* Campaign” of Corazon Aquino. Accordingly, the “*Lambat-Bitag* (Dragnet) Campaign” of Corazon Aquino focuses on the integration of civil-military operations, intelligence, and combat operations and proposed the military tactics of clear, hold, consolidate, and develop. Its main objective was to neutralize the growth of the insurgency and to achieve socio-economic development with the inclusion of Civilian Government Agencies (CGAs) and Non-Government Organizations

(NGOs). The program led to the significant decline in the strength of communist insurgents. However, later on the implementation of the program fell short. In conclusion, the study conveyed that the success in counterinsurgency would be hard to achieve without collaboration among different agencies from the national and local level (Pena, 2007).

On the other hand, the journal article written by F.A Mediansky, "*The New People's Army: A Nation-wide Insurgency in the Philippines*", explores the development and influence of Martial Law to the founding of the NPA in the Philippines. The findings of his study revealed that before the declaration of Martial Law, the communist groups like NPA were treated only by the government as a nuisance. However, during the martial rule of Marcos the NPA formally came into being. The communist group was founded through the union of Jose Maria Sison and Bernabe Buscayno. The former was the founder of the Communist Party in the Philippines (CPP) while the latter was the leader of a Huk guerrilla unit commonly known as Commander Dante. These two personalities supported each other by providing armies to the CPP and a party for the guerrillas. Simply, the NPA was the armed-wing of the CPP. The group ultimately aimed to overthrow Marcos and his dictatorial government. At first, it only had approximately fifty (50) members and guns. They were stationed in the highlands of Luzon. However, in late 1970s to early 1980s, the NPA of the Philippines expanded to the mountains of Visayas and Mindanao (Mediansky, 1986).

In Misamis Oriental, the CPP-NPA was able to infiltrate a few of its municipalities. The municipality of Lugait was one of those. The book of C. Dayta, "*Walay Sapatos*", discusses the *kalihokan* of the CPP-NPA in Lugait. *Kalihokan* refers to the underground movement initiated by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). It also presents the story of the former cadres of the NPA in the municipality. Accordingly, the formation of the NPA in Lugait was naturally brought about by the party's pursuit for organization and expansion. However, the author also mentioned the role of *Khiro* and the Christian Community Seminar (CCS) in the formation and growth of the NPA in Lugait. *Khiro*, (Latin for Christ) is a youth organization of the Roman Catholic church which was created in 1972. The youth that comprised the organization were apparently activists. Initially, they talked about religious discussions, however, the religious tone eventually went political such as: military abuses, unequal distribution of national wealth, landlord-peasant relation, employer-employee relations, and others. On the other hand, the CCS was conducted by a priest to strengthen "Christianism" among the faithful. Furthermore, the recruitment strategies of the NPA cadres in Lugait added to the growth of its NPA members. On the other hand, as early as 1984, members of the NPA in Lugait started to surrender to the government authorities. Their surrender was primarily driven by the irregularities such as disorganization, signs of betrayal, and extreme difficulties while living in the mountains (Dayta, 2007).

In addition, the undergraduate thesis of D. Amarga, "*A History of the Communist Guerrilla Movement in Initao, Misamis Oriental (1980-1990)*", the NPA in Initao started in 1980 at the small sitio of Kamaka, Andales, Initao,

Misamis Oriental. It was started by an educated man and a group of young men who were affected by the issues of the country and who were influenced by the books of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse Tung on communism and socialism. Meanwhile, the growth of the communist group in the municipality was influenced by an increased participation from various sectors of the community like farmers, students, and workers who seek for change. Furthermore, the formidable terrain of Initao influenced the formation of the communist group in the municipality. Accordingly, Initao is mainly composed of valleys, plateaus, and mountains like Mt. Kitanglay. Hence, its rugged terrain and thick jungle was ideal for guerrilla warfare. On the other hand, similar to communist insurgency in Claveria, the presence of the NPA in Initao declined in 1987, when Cory Aquino won the presidential election (Amarga, 2015).

In Manticao, when president Ferdinand Marcos Sr. declared the Philippines under Martial Law, few of the locals in Manticao resisted by joining the CPP-NPA. In 1980, Manticao was infiltrated by the CPP-NPA. Based on the undergraduate thesis of M. Ratunil, *“Naratibong Hisgutan Kabahin sa Kasinatian: Manticao, Misamis Oriental from 1980-1986.”* The findings of this undergraduate thesis revealed that in 1984 to 1986, the communist activities which were referred to as *kalihokan*, became prevalent in the municipality. Accordingly, Jr. Dalucanog and Macario Flores were the prominent figures who spearheaded the proliferation of communist ideas and recruitment in the municipality. Moreover, the growth of the members of the NPA in Manticao was motivated by various factors such as: fear, disgust against the military, and the hope for change. Meanwhile, 1984-1986 was considered as the peak of the NPA in Manticao. These years were characterized with unimaginable chaos such as: sudden and unknown deaths, mass evacuation of the residents, and encounters between the NPA and the military. The year 1986 was the downturn of the NPA in Manticao. Its decline was the election of Cory Aquino as the president of the Philippines (Ratunil, 2019).

Although there is already an existing study about the history of the NPA in Manticao, there is still a need to re-examine the event based on the perspectives of the NPA returnees for continuity and change.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study is a qualitative research in nature. Oral history is employed in the data gathering of the study. The selected key informants of the study is former members of the NPA in the municipality. These informants were gathered through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Upon the informants being identified, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews and Key Informant Interviews (KII). A content validated research questionnaire was used by the researcher throughout the interview. Its content was validated by the adviser of the study. On the other hand, the study was specifically conducted in the selected barangays in Manticao where the former members of communist

group live. Few of the identified barangays are: Tuod, Upper Malubog, Camanga, and Digkilaan.

The utmost confidentiality of the informant responses, they were assigned their corresponding codes. The following codes were used: INM1 for the first male informant; INF1 for the first female informant; IN for Informant; M for Male; F for Female and # for their sequence. Hence, when a code says “INM2”, the code refers to the second male informant of the study. Subsequently, when a code says “INF3”, the source refers to the third female informant of the study.

The ethical standards of research, consist of the consent of all the informants of the study were secured at the outset. To demonstrate, the researcher began her interview with the informants who explained the nature, objectives, and risks of the study. Afterwards, she requested them if they are willing to be interviewed and told them to sign the provided consent form. Eventually, the researcher formally began her interview. On the other hand, in the analysis of the data gathered, the researcher employed Thematic Analysis.

In addition to KII and in-depth interviews, the researcher utilized the available and related published and unpublished materials. These include: thesis, dissertations, academic papers, and legal documents, among others. The researcher also visited local repositories (e.g local government archives, library, school library) of the municipality of Lugait, Manticao, Naawan, and Initao. To gather additional data, the researcher also visited local police and army stations in the previously mentioned municipalities to inquire related information about the NPAs in Manticao. Lastly, the researcher utilized the pertinent literature available on the internet.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Manticao in Perspective**

Manticao is a coastal municipality of the province of Misamis Oriental. It is located in the western part of Misamis Oriental, approximately 65 kilometers away from Cagayan de Oro City and 25 kilometers away from Iligan City. It is bounded on the north by the municipalities of Naawan, Alubijid and El Salvador and on the south by Iligan City. While it is bounded on the east by the municipality of Opol and on the west by the municipality of Lugait and of the Iligan Bay (Lacbain, 2000).

The geographic-political division of Manticao is divided into thirteen (13) barangays and it covers a land area of 123.01 square kilometers which constitutes 3.93% of the total area of Misamis Oriental. Two of the thirteen (13) barangays of Manticao, Poblacion and Punta Silum are situated near the coast of the municipality. Meanwhile, the other eleven (11) barangays of Manticao are situated in the mountainous area of the municipality namely: Argayoso, Balintad,



Camanga, Digkilaan, Mahayahay, Pagawan, Paniangan, Patag, Tuod, and Upper Malubog (Lacbain, 2000).

These mountainous barangays of Manticao shared common borders to the NPA Red Areas in its neighboring municipalities. For instance, barangay Camanga have common borders to Aya-aya and Upper Talacogon of the municipality of Lugait. Accordingly, Aya-Aya and Upper Talacogon are two of the Red Areas of the NPA in Lugait. Red Areas refer to the interior areas of the municipality where the armed group of the underground movement reside. Moreover, one of the common borders of barangay Cabalantian of Manticao to the municipality of Lugait is barangay Betahon. In a similar way, barangay Betahon was also an NPA Red Area of Lugait. In addition, barangay Camanga has shared borders to both Lugait and Iligan City through barangay Hindang of Lugait and barangay Bunawan of Iligan City. Both barangays were part of District 1, Section 2 of the Northern Mindanao Provincial Committee of the CPP-NPA. Lastly, barangay Digkilaan and Iligan City has a common border, barangay Mainit. Similarly, barangay Mainit is one of the barangays under Section 3 of the District 1 CPP-NPA's Northern Mindanao Provincial Committee (Dayta, 2007).

The topography of Manticao is characterized by different levels of hilly rugged terrain, valley and mountains. Based on the slope category of the lands of Manticao, the municipality is generally classified as flat, rolling, slightly rolling, and mountainous. With respect to the mountainous areas of the municipality, it falls under the fourth (4) category. Specifically, the fourth slope category has 30 to 50 percent slope which consist of rough and hilly dissected mountainous areas. Few of the barangays in Manticao which fall under this category are: Mahayahay, Upper Malubog, Digkilaan, Balintad, Camanga, Pagawan, and Cabalantian. Hills with sloping foothills and high relief can be found on the southern side and undulating foot-slopes on the northern side of these areas (Lacabain, 2000). While steep and rugged terrain, ranging in elevation from 600 to 1000 meters extends to the municipality's eastern limit. In the case of Upper Malubog, the famous Dunque Hill is located. Dunque Hill is considered as one of the highest peaks of the municipality. It is about 26 kilometers away from Poblacion, and approximately 2600 feet above sea level (House of Java, 2024).

On the other hand, the municipality of Manticao has two (2) major rivers: Manticao river and Tuod River. The Manticao river was formerly known as Naawan river. On 21 June 1957, through the Republic Act No. 1756, the name of Naawan river was changed to Manticao. A mountain of solid silica rocks is found near the river. Hence, the river is filled with 75% pure silica rocks and 25% soil. It also contains solid rocks like *bantilis*. In fact, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of the municipality utilized the stone, sand, and gravel of the river for their construction projects. Aside from rocks, shrimp, fish, and crabs can also be found in the river. Meanwhile, trees like *Lanhan Tugas*, *Antipolo*, *Kaloot* tree, coconut tree, bamboo, and bananas surround it. Unfortunately, during flash floods and heavy rain, the river erodes the soil and it overflows to the area of the nearby residents. In order to prevent soil erosion and flash floods, the LGU of the municipality built a dam in the river. The other major river of Manticao is the Tuod river. Accordingly, the river is a tributary of the Alubijid river in the

northern part of the municipality. In Tuod itself, the river merges with that of Manticao river which drains at the coast in Manticao (Lacbain, 2000).

It is discernible that the municipality has access to both mountains and seas. Its two barangays, Poblacion and Punta Silum are situated near the Iligan Bay while eleven (11) of its barangays are located in its hinterlands which share boundaries to Iligan City and as far as El Salvador City. In fact, these barangays have common boundaries to nearby municipalities which were infiltrated by the NPA. Therefore, one of the various factors of the foundation and growth of an NPA unit in a certain area is the geographical advantage of the chosen locale. Typically, the NPA flourish in an area that has shared boundaries to other neighboring areas. Such geographical characteristics will naturally give them easy access and coordination to the other nearby NPA units. In addition, aside from the shared borders of Manticao to its nearby municipalities and cities which make it an ideal area for the NPA to flourish, is its rugged terrain, high relief, and thick forest cover. As a matter of fact, one of the temporary camps of the NPA in the Manticao was in the wilderness of Upper Malubog. The said barangay was occupied by the NPA due primarily to its high elevation and thick forest cover which make it difficult to be accessed by the military. Generally, the rugged terrain, high relief, and thick forest cover of the mountainous barangays of the municipality provide natural protection, barrier, and shelter to the NPA. On top of that, it will isolate them from the military forces of the Philippine government as well as from the residents of the municipality.

Meanwhile, it is not yet clear and confirmed that the said river systems and falls were occupied by the NPA of Manticao, it is safe to presume that they utilized these bodies of water in order to survive. Knowing that these are the major bodies of water in the municipality, they perhaps used these as their main sources of water for cooking, drinking, and bathing, and even built a temporary camp near them. Despite the uncertainty if the NPA in Manticao utilized its river systems and falls, it is certain that the physical features of Manticao are fair or balanced. The municipality possessed both landform and water systems which are fundamentals to the establishment and sustainability of the NPA. Hence, the geographical advantages of Manticao is one of the factors that led to the formation and growth of the NPA in the municipality.

### ***Demographic Profile of Manticao (1960-1995)***

Manticao had a total population of 700 in 1902. This population gradually grew and it amounted to 15,212 in 1960. However, in 1970, it decreased to 13,503— a 1.18% of its 1960's population count. Accordingly, in 1960, the total population of Manticao was fifteen thousand two hundred twelve (15, 212) however, in 1970, the population count decreased to 1.18%. The decline was primarily caused by the migration of its few residents due to the relocation of Misamis Mahogany Company (MISMACO). It was a logging company plant in barangay Tuod which ceased its operations and relocated to Iligan City in 1970.

In the years that followed, in 1975 to 1995, the population rate of Manticao steadily increased (Lacbain, 2000).

The constant increase of the population rate of Manticao, the Planning and Development Office divided the household of the municipality into: urban and rural households. By definition, urban population refers to the population residing in the urban barangays, while rural population refers to the population residing in rural barangays. Among the thirteen (13) barangays of Manticao, Poblacion is classified as an urban barangay because of its urban population of six thousand four hundred sixty-seven (6,467) people. It is also the seat of the government offices and is considered as the town center. The urbanizing barangays include: Punta Silum, Tuod, and Cabalantian which has a total population of eight thousand seven hundred eleven (8,711) which is greater than the total population of nine (9) barangays in the municipality (Lacbain, 2000).

The demographic profile of the municipality ranging from the sex and distribution of the total population of Manticao in 1960-1995, totalled 22,630. Accordingly, 11,686 (51.64%) of the 22,630 population count of Manticao in 1995 are males while 10,944 are females (48.36%).<sup>35</sup> While the productive or working population comprise 52.20% of the total population and the dependent population comprise the remaining 47.80%, with majority or 36.88% below fifty (50) years old (Lacbain, 2000).

In general, the people are the “lifelines” of the CPP-NPA. When the party adopted a protracted people’s war, the residents, specifically in the countryside became “the pond of the fishes (NPA)”. They become the subject for mass recruitment, thus expansion of the CPP-NPA. In Manticao, specifically in 1980 where the recruitment for NPA members was prevalent, its total population count was seventeen thousand two hundred ninety-four (17, 294). Technically, the municipality was sparsely populated. In fact, the majority of the barangays which were infiltrated by the NPA had only a hundred residents. For example, Upper Malubog (575), Digkilaan (596), Camanga (852), and Balinted (569). Only barangay Tuod had more than a hundred residents in 1980 which was one thousand nine hundred seventy- nine (1979). The sparse population in Manticao is advantageous for the NPA for their quick recruitment with lesser risks. On top of that, these barangays are situated in the hinterlands of Manticao, kilometers away from the military detachment in Tuod and Poblacion. On the other hand, based on the census data of the municipality from 1960-1995, the residents of Manticao were composed of eleven thousand six hundred eighty six (11, 686) male and ten thousand nine hundred forty-four (10, 944) female. There were 52.20% who were part of the working population and 47.80% who belonged to the dependent population. In relation to the NPA unit in Manticao, the group was composed of both male and female and employed and unemployed residents of the municipality. In simpler terms, the sex distribution and non-dependency and dependency ratio of the residents of Manticao did not greatly affect the recruitment for NPA members in the municipality.

***Academic and Religious Institutions of Manticao (1960-1995)***

Manticao had few learning institutions before the advent of Marcos Sr's dictatorship. One among many is Manticao Central School. Manticao Central School was built in 1925. It is in fact the oldest infrastructure of Manticao. The school is one of the Gabaldon School Buildings, also referred to as the Gabaldons. The Gabaldons were built by the American colonial government with American architect William E. Parsons as the designer of the blueprints of said buildings from 1907 to 1946 (Rebuta, 2023).

In 1955, Rev. Fr. Peter Wang, the first parish priest of Manticao established St. Anthony Parish School. It is a Catholic secondary school on Manticao which was borne out of the increasing number of Aglipayans, who in the absence of the parish priest took over the Catholic Church. Initially, it was a four (4) room school building by the parishioners. Aside from St. Anthony Parish School and Manticao Central School, there were several institutions that existed in Manticao before Martial Law. These are Cabalantian National High School, Tuod Elementary School, Manticao National High School, Balintad Elementary School, and among others (Lacbain, 2000).

Significantly, the number of students and literacy rate of the learners in Manticao in 1960 to 1995, ranges from 4-21 years old. It comprises Elementary (7-12 years old), Secondary (13-16 years old), and Tertiary (17-21 years old) school levels. Of the fifteen thousand two hundred sixty-one (15, 261) total household populations of both sexes, fourteen thousand two hundred forty-seven (14, 247) are literates and only one thousand fourteen (1, 014) are illiterates. In the urban area, there are ten thousand nine hundred thirty-three (10, 933) literates compared to six hundred sixty eight (668) illiterates. In the rural area, three thousand three hundred fourteen (3, 314) literates and three hundred forty-six (346) illiterates. Of these, about 77% were residing in the urban and urbanizing areas. In addition, the table shows that the age group ranging from ten (10) years old to thirty-nine (39) years old has the most number of literates that accounts to 77% of the total number of literates (Lacbain, 2000).

In relation to the NPA in Manticao, in other areas that are infiltrated by the CPP-NPA, lack of secondary education was one of the factors behind the establishment and expansion of the communist group. In the case of Manticao, based on the data above, the majority of its residents both in the urban and rural areas were literate. Only one thousand fourteen (1, 014) are illiterates of the fifteen thousand two hundred sixty-one (15, 261) total household population of Manticao in 1990. However, in relation to the NPA in Manticao, the majority of its members were students, even elementary pupils. Therefore, illiteracy is a "weak" factor to the establishment of the NPA in Manticao.

Currently, the number of churches in Manticao is approximately thirty-three (33) buildings. One (1) is located in barangay Balintad; one (1) in Mahayahay; twenty-one (21) in Poblacion; four (4) in Cabalantian; two (2) in Pagawan; one (1) in Punta Silum; two (2) in Paniangan and; one (1) in Tuod. In relation, the major religious denominations in the municipality are: Roman Catholic Church, Bible Baptist Church, Assembly of God, Philippine

Independent Catholic Church, United Pentecostal Church International, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and among others. One of the oldest churches in Manticao is the Catholic Church, specifically the San Antonio de Padua church of barangay Poblacion. It was established in 1952 by Rev. Fr. Peter Wang. Meanwhile, in 1990, based on the 1990 NSO Census of Population and Housing, Roman Catholic had the greatest number of followers, 16, 260 (75.92%) (Lacbain, 2000).

These religious denominations depict that the majority of the Manticaonons were religious. By saying religious, they follow and strongly believe in the doctrine of their church and the gospel of the Lord which consequently affect their sense of justice. On the eve of Martial Law in the Philippines, the church stood in opposition to its implementation. In the case of Manticao, there are various narratives about the impact of Martial Law to the churches in the municipality. For one, despite the imposition of Martial Law, the churches in the municipality continued to offer masses or religious activities to their respective believers. On the other hand, there were narratives that the churches of Manticao like the Catholic Church agitated the residents of the municipality to revolt against Martial Law by spreading information about how Martial Law defies the will of God and the doctrine of their church. This is usually done during homily for the Catholics and sermon for the protestants.

However, few of the churches of Manticao provided support for the NPA by allowing them to use their chapel as a venue for their meeting like in Lugait. On top of that, the NPA used the church to recruit members for the underground movement. However, one cannot conclusively say that the churches in Manticao as religious institutions are connected to the CPP-NPA and if their support to the communist group was voluntary or not. Nonetheless, the churches in Manticao like the Catholic church influenced the establishment of the NPA in the municipality.

### ***Economic Condition of Manticao (1990-1995)***

Manticao has a total land area of thirteen thousand ninety-five (13, 095) hectares. Of this thirteen thousand ninety-five (13, 095), 27.01% covers the urban and urbanizable barangays such as: Poblacion, Punta Silum, Cabalantian, and Tuod. The remaining nine (9) rural barangays of the municipality occupy the bigger portion of its land area. For instance, Mahayahay has an area of three thousand eighty-one (3, 081) hectares while Punta Silum has the smallest covering only 2.37% of the entire land area of Manticao. Approximately, 52% of the municipal lands are alienable and disposable. These areas stretch from Iligan Bay on the west, inward towards the middle part of the municipality, up to Camanga and minor portions of Tuod and Balintad. The remaining portions going towards the eastern boundary of El Salvador, Opol, Naawan, and Iligan City, are public lands (Lacbain, 2000).

When it comes to the vegetation and soil type of the lands of Manticao, there were three (3) types of soil which covered the municipality. These are: Lourdes Clay Loam with 10689.45 hectares and Malalag Clay Loam with an area of 2012.70 hectares. The former occupies 81.63% of the total land area of the

municipality. Its vegetative covers are commonly open cultivated area, brushlands, and built-up areas. Lastly, the lands of Manticao contain undifferentiated mountain soils which constitute about 392.65 hectares of the land. This type of soil is found in the public lands of Upper Malubog, Mahayahay, and Digkilaan. With an alienable and a vegetative soil type of the municipal lands of Manticao, agriculture flourished in the area. In fact, it is the major source of income of the residents of the municipality (Lacbain, 2000).

#### *Agricultural Production*

The agricultural land of Manticao covers six thousand three hundred seventy-two (6, 372) hectares of its total land area. It represents 48.67 percent of the thirteen thousand ninety-five (13, 095) hectares of its municipal lands. Out of the six thousand three hundred seventy-two (6, 372) agricultural land, four thousand six hundred five (4, 605) hectares (72.26%) is planted with various kinds of crops, while the remaining 1767.84 hectares (27.74%) is idle and open grassland. They commonly cultivated crops such as: banana, corn, vegetables, fruit trees, legumes, and root crops. While its dominant and based crop is coconut. As a matter of fact, in 1999, coconut had the highest share of 30.54 percent. It was followed by banana, corn, rice, and root crops. Unfortunately, due to the increasing conversion of cropland to residential land, agricultural production gradually decreased. However, after four (4) years the average crop production increased due to adoption of sustainable crop production technologies by farmers with adequate knowledge, and improved management skills in the application of various crop production technologies. Hence, it becomes the major occupation of the residents. In 1999, there were 6027 (23.58%) of the entire population of Manticao who considered farming as their main source of income. A total of 4460 (74.0%) of the farmers are concentrated in rural areas while 1567 (26.0%) are found in the urban areas. The 99.67% of these farmers engaged in crop production while the remaining 0.33% engaged in orchard, ornamental, poultry and livestock farming (Lacbain, 2000).

#### *Livestock and Poultry Farms*

From 1995 to 1999, livestock and poultry production were promising ventures in Manticao. In the said year, livestock and poultry production increased at an annual rate of 39.51 percent. The presence of poultry contract growers is the main reason for the increase in production. They utilized the close proximity of Manticao to the markets of Cagayan de Oro City and Iligan City. On the other hand, in terms of livestock production, it was meant for both meat and as draft animals. As draft animals, they will primarily help the farmers in tilling their farms. Furthermore, livestock was intended for breeding purposes with an average price of 10,000.00 pesos per head at 1 year old. As a matter of fact, in 1999, Sto. Nino Farms has raised four thousand (4, 000) hogs, while the Willkom Farm has raised about 50 livestock. Conversely, poultry farms have a total production of four hundred thousand (400, 000) heads. In total, in 1998, there was one (1) livestock

farmer and four (4) poultry farmers. Aside from poultry and livestock farming, the residents of Manticao also engaged in fishing (Lacbain, 2000).

### *Fishing Industry*

Two of the coastal barangays of Manticao, Poblacion and Punta Silum considered fishing as its major occupation. In 1998, there were six hundred fifty-three (653) fishermen in the municipality. Of the six hundred fifty-three (653) fishermen, four hundred fifty-seven (457) were full-time and one hundred ninety-six (196) were part-time fishermen. In addition, a total of 200 “bancas” were registered. One hundred forty (140) of which were motorized, while the remaining sixty (60) *bancas* were non-motorized. In terms of their fishing method, the fishermen of the municipality employed hooks and fishnets. Dynamite fishing was also rampant in the municipality (Lacbain, 2000).

### *Forestal Lands*

Manticao has rugged terrain and vast hilly mountainous areas. A large portion of its municipal lands is suitable for plantation forest. These plantation forests can be found in the eastern and hinterland areas of Upper Malubog, Mahayahay, and Digkilaan and patches of lands within Punta Silum, and parts of Patag, Paniangan, and Pagawan. Apart from plantation forest, the lands of Manticao have contiguous areas suited for perennial trees and vines within Balintad and Tuod. Its contiguous area for rice cultivation is found within the alluvial plains of Poblacion on the west going eastward towards Paniangan and Cabalantian. In addition, the forest area of Manticao has been declared as both alienable and disposable. It is also classified as: commercial forest, non-commercial forest, production forest, and protection forest. Commercial forest refers to the forest that was awarded to corporations, cooperatives, and associations. Non-commercial forest was awarded to individuals or communities actually residing adjacent to the forest area. Production forests are forestlands managed primarily for production of timber and other tree products. Lastly, protection forests are forestlands maintained primarily for their beneficial effects on soil, water, and the environment in general (Lacbain, 2000).

### *Mineral Resources*

The mountainous areas of Manticao, specifically its geology and land formation, contains various mineral deposits. The metallic and non-metallic minerals that can be found in the mountains of Manticao are: iron, cobalt, chromium, copper, chromite, manganese, pyrites, and gold. The metallic mineral deposits of Manticao are specifically found in barangay Upper Malubog, Mahayahay, and Digkilaan. Moreover, dunite, manganese, red clays, chromite, and quartz are also found in Tuod. Silica and pozzolan are also found in Punta Silum and Paniangan. Meanwhile, the non-metallic deposits such as sand, gravel, and rock grains also abound in Manticao. Fine and coarse aggregates are found in

Poblacion, Cabalantian, Tuod, and part of Punta Silum. However, the forest covers and mineral deposits of Manticao are threatened and slowly decreasing (Lacbain, 2000).

In general, although the data presented above is approximately a decade after the formation of the NPA in Manticao, it can be inferred that the municipality was slowly progressing in terms of its economic condition. One of the reasons behind the participation of a person to the CPP-NPA is poverty. Consequently, it became a driving force to the growth of its members. In the case of Manticao, when Martial Law was implemented its residents were challenged by the increasing price of market goods. However, there were no presence of rallies and protests in the municipality that expressed dissent to the LGU officials of Manticao or to the president Ferdinand as a whole. In other words, the Manticaonons were initially passive about the impact of Martial Law. Hence, poverty was a “weak” factor for the establishment of the NPA in Manticao.

#### ***Political Condition of Manticao (1960-1995)***

In 1949, Manticao became a municipality of Misamis Oriental. On 7 February 1949, Laureto A. Talaroc became its first mayor. He governed the municipality from 1949 to 1951. His vice-mayor was Juan Medado. In 1951, he was replaced by Alejandro D. Uy Sr. He was the mayor of the municipality from 1951 to 1964 (Lacbain, 2000).

The mayor who followed Alejandro D. Uy was Eugenio B. Alcido. He was the mayor of Manticao when Ferdinand Marcos Sr. put the entire Philippines under Martial Law. His administration specifically started in 1967 to 1979. In 1979, Alejandro D. Uy was appointed as mayor of Manticao for a year. In 1980 to 1986, Advenigo Talaroc became the mayor of Manticao. In his administration, the CPP-NPA reached and grew in Manticao. Meanwhile, in 1986, Dr. Jezelinda Orong, M.D. was appointed as mayor of Manticao for one year. He was then replaced by Paquito Anggot who was also appointed as mayor of the municipality for only a year. In 1992, Dr. Jezelinda Orong, M.D. was elected as mayor of Manticao. Her administration started in 1992 until 1995 (Lacbain, 2000).

#### ***Progress and Development***

In terms of the achievements of the abovementioned mayors of Manticao, due to the scarcity of sources, only a few are known. Accordingly, Alejandro D. Uy pioneered the economic development of the municipality. Few of his achievements are the opening of INCHROME and PHILMAC which led to the increase of population and employment rate of Manticao. On top of that, his administration improved the street lighting, irrigation, flood management, recreational centers, and the opening of Bukidnon State University external studies in Manticao. While in the onset of Martial Law and the height of the NPA in Manticao, the leaders of Manticao focused their projects in the *Masagana* project of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. and in providing relocation sites to the evacuees (Ratunil, 2019)).



### *Martial Law Era*

The political condition of Manticao was also affected by the implementation of Martial Law. Generally, as employees of the Philippine government, the LGU officials of the municipality followed the orders of the president that were mandated to them. They cooperated with the local police and the AFP military detachment in the municipality to maintain peace and order. However, like the majority of the residents of Manticao, they were also passive about the unfair effect of Martial Law, especially concerning the price increase of market goods. On the other hand, when the presence of the NPA grew in Manticao, the LGU officials of the municipality had no concrete counterinsurgency plans. On top of that, there were narratives that few of them secretly supported the underground movement. However, similar to the involvement of the churches of Manticao to the CPP-NPA, one cannot conclusively say that their involvement was voluntary or not. Nonetheless, the passive character of the LGU officials in Manticao contributed to the establishment of the CPP-NPA in the municipality.

In synthesis, the geographic advantage, demographic, economic, religious, and political condition of Manticao during the Martial Law years were just factors to the foundation and growth of the CPP-NPA in the municipality. Therefore, how did the NPA in Manticao begin?

### **The Formation of the NPA in Manticao**

The effect of Martial Law in Manticao was faintly felt by the residents not until 1980. In the early years of Martial Law, Manticao was the same as before its declaration. Its residents were still doing their daily routine and activities freely and peacefully. The locals and the police officers were in a good relationship opposing the grand narrative that they harassed civilians. Although curfew was implemented, it created an advantageous effect to the locals (INF1). It lessens the accidents and criminalities in the municipality. INF1 expressed that when Martial Law was declared by Marcos Sr., Manticao was relatively peaceful.

### *Local Formation*

Unlike in Manila, he could hardly remember that protests and rallies were present in Manticao after the declaration of Martial Law. As a matter of fact, in barangay Camanga, especially on Fridays (*tabo*), its residents used to gather in Zone 1 to sell their products and buy groceries (INM2). During fiestas, the locals will definitely enjoy cockfighting during day-time and at night time the so-called *bayle* (dance or ball)—characterized by ladies sitting in the center of the dance floor wearing dresses while men in their formal attire are watching outside the dance floor choosing the ladies whom he will dance with when the music is set.

The same situation is true in barangay Tuod. INM19 vividly remembers that every Friday of the week, he and his mother come down from Purok 7 to the public market of Tuod to buy groceries among other things. Even the residents of

its neighboring barangays used to have their market day in Tuod. Indeed, Friday was an exciting and a busy day for the Manticaoons.

In the same light, INF1 shared that she could hardly distinguish the changes brought by Martial Law to her life. For her, as far as the early years of Martial Law is concerned, she had the same life before its proclamation. By saying the same life, she meant that she still went to school, heard masses, and played with her friends. Literally, she can still do what she normally does. Apparently, during the Martial Law, both the schools and churches of the municipality did not cease its class and daily or obligatory masses. However, INF1 remembers that there were lingering hearsays about the possible impact of Martial Law in her community.

Although forced labor and eradication of joblessness remained a hearsay, but there was one visible change that was brought by Martial Law in Manticao — increase price of goods. INM17 shared that the price of goods in Manticao during Martial Law was relatively high. While the buyers purchase the local products at a relatively low price. On the other hand, despite the increasing debt of the Philippines during Martial Law, a resident of Tuod still recalls that Marcos Sr. gave them relief goods such as one (1) sack of rice, canned goods, oil, and noodles. However, these relief goods were insufficient and an unsustainable solution to their dire situation. Eventually, the impact of Martial Law to the locals of Manticao became visible in 1980 through the presence of the NPA (INF2).

#### *Impact of Martial Law*

In general, the implementation of Martial Law in the Philippines by Ferdinand Marcos did not abruptly affect the life of the residents of Manticao. Gradually, the residents of the municipality felt that the increasing debt of the Marcos administration led to the price increase of market goods. However, the majority of its residents were initially passive about the unfair consequences of Martial Law not until the CPP-NPA reached the municipality. In relation, the formation of the NPA in the municipality speaks about the repercussions of Martial Law that were negatively expressed in various ways.

Specifically, the foundation and growth of the NPA in Manticao cannot be solely attributed to the implementation of Martial Law. Aside from fear and military abuses to human rights that are already discussed in the undergraduate thesis of M. Ratunil, the foundation and development of the NPA in Manticao can be highly attributed to the role of Fr. A and the *Katilingbanong Pag-ampo* and the recruitment strategy of ‘ka Mario.

#### *The Motivators*

The presence of the NPA in Manticao began in 1980. It started a year before Martial Law was lifted in 1981. When Marcos dictatorship ended, the members of the NPA in the municipality rapidly increased. Accordingly, the NPA in Manticao was founded by a Catholic priest (INM7). Fr. “A” is an Irish citizen. He was born on 3 February 1950. He attended St. Gerard Grade School and Central

Catholic School High School. After graduating from the University of Idaho, he entered the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was established in 1961 by the American President, John F. Kennedy. It is an independent agency and program of the United States that trains and deploys volunteers to provide international development assistance. Eventually, he was ordained as a priest on 12 September 1981 under the Columban religious order (Dayta, 2007).

Fr. A was once assigned in the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro. Later on, he was assigned to San Antonio de Padua Parish in Manticao. In 1952, San Antonio de Padua, the first Catholic church of Manticao was established. Its first parish priest was Rev. Fr. Peter Wang. As a priest, Fr. A was active in pro-life groups. Pro-life groups is a non-profit organization of citizens who are concerned about issues pertaining to the inherent value and dignity of human life. As a matter of fact, his dedication to pro-life issues granted him opportunities to speak throughout the Philippine islands. Indeed, he was loved by all who knew him (INM7).

The kindness of Fr. A is also attested by INM7. INM7 was not just a former armed man of the NPA in Manticao, but he was once a sacristan of the Catholic chapel in Tuod under Fr. A. According to him, Fr. A was kind and helpful to the locals of Manticao. He rarely asked for mass offerings and he often gave financial assistance to the sick. In contrast, INM7 also revealed that Fr. A spearheaded the recruitment of the NPA members in Manticao.

In 1980, INM7 noticed that the church began to list down the names of the mass attendees which they do not normally do. Also, every after the mass, there was a separate group of people who were waiting outside the church and there were few who joined them. Whenever the priest approaches them, they will transfer to a secluded place in the chapel. He remembers that this group of people talk about things that are not connected to the teachings and doctrine of the church.

Meanwhile, when Fr. A was supposed to offer a mass in the town chapels of Tuod, he instead conducts a lecture in the wilderness of the town. For instance, INM7 recalls that in the wilderness of Bangko, a town in barangay Digkilaan, he accompanied the priest here in his lecture which was not entirely about the church. He believed that the attendees of that lecture were townspeople from the hinterlands of Manticao. He often talks about the injustices and human rights abuses of Marcos dictatorship which is in contradiction to the teachings of God. That there should be equality between the rich and the poor as what the Almighty wants from humanity. Afterwards, he will tell them about the communist party of the country which shared the same goal. Indirectly, the priest agitated them to revolt against Marcos dictatorship through the CPP-NPA. The lecture of the priest will end after he distributed a book to the attendees. Due to these incidents, INM7 suspected that the priest was a rebel or a member of the CPP-NPA.

The suspicion of INM7 was confirmed when he accompanied Fr. A in Nangcaon, Opol, Tumpagon, Cagayan de Oro City, and Dagobdob, Opol. In these places, he did the same kind of a lecture instead of a mass. The only difference was that there were armed men who carelessly and casually approached the priest and offered a hand-shake as if they were long-term friends. The same is true when they visited Dagobdob to offer a mass during its fiesta celebration.

The involvement of the Catholic church to the NPA in Manticao is also attested by INM17. Every Sunday of the week, the Roman Catholic believers in Digkilaan had their *Katilingbanong Pag-ampo* (Universal Prayer). *Katilingbanong Pag-ampo* is the former name of today's Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC). BEC is a small community of Christians, usually of families who gather together around the Word of God and the Eucharist. It originated and inspired from the Liberation Theology in Latin America which considers the communities as a new way of "being the church", the church at the grassroots, in the neighborhood, and villages. In the Philippines, its first BEC was in the 1960s.

In the case of barangay Digkilaan, during the BEC, the Catholics will gather inside their nearest chapel. A gospel reading which was followed by a homily was part of the devotion. At first, the assigned liturgical leader solely preached the gospel of the Lord. However, later on, the atmosphere of the homily changed leaning towards the issues of the Philippines, communism, and revolution. The same was also known by INM8. Accordingly, in the 1980s, the Catholics in every barangay were divided into *selda*. *Selda* is a group of Catholic families that are members of BEC. In fact, it is called as Selda BEC and a grouping of *seldas* constitute a *Kapilya* (Chapel) BEC.<sup>41</sup> This division or groupings of family by the BEC of the Catholic church was taken into advantage by the NPAs. What they did was, in each *selda*, they planted members who will recruit the believers to join the movement. INM13 also recalled that, back in the time that they were summoned by their leaders in the wilderness of Sagyawan, a barangay of Manticao they met their fellow NPAs and of them were seminarians and priests.

However, one cannot also conclusively say that the Catholic church as an institution founded the communist movement in the municipality. Fr. A presumably acted on his own without the help of the Catholic church as a whole. It does not necessarily mean that his involvement in the underground movement made the entire Catholic Church of Manticao a supporter of the NPA.

### ***Motivation of Leaders***

One among many reasons why the members of the NPA in the Philippines proliferated was due to its skilled "lecturers". In 1981 to 1982, the members of the NPA in Manticao tremendously grew. Aside from the previous communist activities of Fr. A., the role of 'ka Mario added to its growth. According to INM7, 'ka Mario was a student of Fr. "A". A student in a sense that he was one of the individuals who were taught and trained by him through his lectures about communism. It was believed that he was once a member of the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) who became a turncoat (INM6). Others will say that he was once an ordinary farmer and a student (INM4). While for some, he was just a happy-go-lucky man (INM19). Despite the conflicting narratives of his past life, one thing is for sure about 'ka Mario, he was a good and an effective public speaker. With his talent, he became one of the assigned and prominent NPA "lecturers" in Manticao. On top of

that, he employed force and was brutal in recruiting members of the communist group (INM7).

The NPA 'lecturers' in Manticao like 'ka Mario ideally recruit the youth. In agreement, the Committee Report No. 186 of the National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification, and Reconciliation stated that the recruitment of the youth was a priority to easily replenish the ranks of the officials in the communist organization. On top of that, they have more capacity for ideological formation and organizing.<sup>55</sup> In Manticao, the youth were recruited because of their passion with guns. Aside from firearms, the youth were also bribed by the NPA with money (INM19). Given the impoverished condition of that time, they usually accept the offer. The technique was apparently successful because the majority of the members of the NPA in Manticao was the youth regardless of sex and most were students (INM4). However, the growth of the members of the NPA in the 1980s were not only influenced by its effective 'lecturers', some of them joined due to military abuses and to seek revenge.

### *Human Rights Issues*

Although M. Ratunil already discussed the role of the military abuses to human rights to the establishment of the NPA in Manticao in his undergraduate thesis, there were few cases of military abuses in Manticao that were not included in his study.

In 1982, the 26th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines was deployed in Manticao specifically in Tuod. The deployment of the said army imparted more negative experiences to the locals instead of positive ones. One of these negative experiences was that of INM18. The deployment of the AFP in Manticao created suspicion instead of peace and security. Without proper investigation, suspected NPAs were captured and tortured by the military. At times, they abuse the locals especially when they are drunk.

The AFP does not only abuse the locals by mere suspicion but they also steal the chickens, pigs, bananas, and among other farm produce of the locals through the help of the *Kabisig*, residents of the municipality who served as the right hand of the military. There are also narratives that they ape women even married women., especially when they were influenced with illegal drugs like marijuana (INM13).

On top of it all, fear was also brought by the military to the locals of Manticao. Afraid to be caught between the possible encounter of the military and the NPA, they chose to temporarily seek refuge in the wilderness and near the military camps, especially at night. However, there were residents of Manticao who chose not to wait and hide, especially those victims of military abuse who seek revenge (INF3).

Indeed, the establishment of the NPA in Manticao can be attributed to several reasons and NPA figures. However, Martial Law tremendously influenced its formation and growth. For instance, due to the abuses of the military officers of

the Philippine government and the desire for revenge the underground movement flourished in the municipality. Subsequently, the members of the communist group grew even bigger which led to the formal organization of the NPA in Manticao.

## **Fundamentals of the NPA in Manticao**

### ***Recruitment Strategies and Procedures***

The recruitment process that was adopted by the NPA in Manticao was hideous and meticulous. The recruitment was either done by Catholic priests and laymen and Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda (SYP) through the Grupong Pangmasa (GP). To reiterate, the SYP conducts political education to the potential recruits while the *Grupong Pangmasa*, commonly known as *masa*, are the civilians who provide food and logistical support to the NPA (INM7).

In the case of the priest and the liturgists of the Catholic church, they ideally conduct the recruitment inside a church or a chapel especially during and after masses. Upon entry, select workers of the church will list down the names of the believers who attended the mass. During a homily, the priest commonly relates its reflection to the sufferings and injustices committed by Marcos dictatorship and how it defies the teachings of the Lord. On the other hand, at the end of the mass, the identified potential recruits will be summoned to either stay inside the church or to transfer to another area. In that certain area, members of the NPA who were assigned to conduct the lecture were waiting and they will be joined by the priest and the liturgical leaders (INM7).

Most of the potential recruits who entered that area ideally become an NPA. Upon becoming an official member of the group, they were informed and introduced to the commanders and exchanged a hand-shake, a sign of acceptance and official membership to the group. The new recruits were later given a name which is different from their given name. This is what they call *alyas* or *koda* which ideally start with “ka” which stands for “*kasama*” (INM7).

The recruitment activities of the priest and the liturgical leaders was not confined to churches and chapels. At times, they will initially visit and gather the locals in the hinterlands of Manticao like Digkilaan in the guise of a mass offering. In fact, they also use the opportunity to recruit members during a fiesta celebration. After several visits, they will reveal their true intention upon asking them to join their cause (INM19).

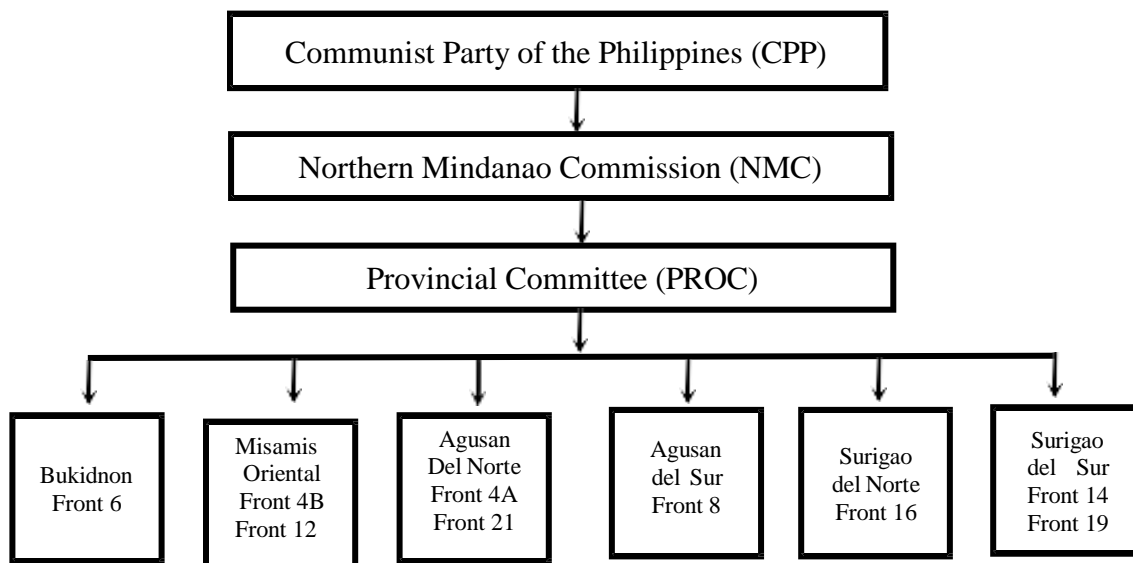
The recruitment strategy of the SYPs was not far different from the priest and the liturgists. The SYP conducts the recruitment to the locals with the help of the *masa*. Ideally, the SYP will gather the residents of their chosen area inside a house of a *masa*. For some reason, the majority of the residents joined. From there, they will begin their recruitment not directly with a lecture but with a song. After which, the SYP will prepare his lecture materials, manila paper or a chalkboard and a chalk. He will then attach the manila paper to a wall where he can comfortably write. While few of his armed men guard the house. The NPA “lecturer” ideally ends his discussion by promising the locals that if they succeed, lands, affordable price of goods, and equality will be given to them. After the lecture, the

SYP and his comrades will enjoy the food prepared by the *masa*. They will stay in the same house for two to three (2-3) days and stay in another house or area to find more recruits (INF4).

The recruitment strategies of the SYP gained several new recruits. However, the membership of the locals to NPA did not mean that they adhere to the ideals of communism. In fact, there was an incident in Manticao where a resident questioned the goals of the NPA. Instead of getting an answer, he met his untimely death. Accordingly, during the recruitment process, the recruiters should not carry and if not, display their guns. However, this was not the case in Manticao. For one, fear led them to join the communist group which subsequently proliferated its members.

***Organizational Structure***

The NPA in Manticao followed the communist organizational structure of Northern Mindanao Commission (NMC). Before 1986, the NMC was established and it consisted of six (6) provincial committees namely: Bukidnon Provincial Committee, Misamis Oriental Provincial Committee, Agusan del Norte Provincial Committee, Agusan del Sur Provincial Committee, and Surigao del Sur Provincial Committee. Each of these six (6) provincial committees were assigned to the Front Guerrilla Unit (FGU) (Escalon and Galgo, 2003).



**Illustration 1.** The Northern Mindanao Commission (NMC)

The illustration above presents the general organization structure of the Northern Mindanao Commission (NMC) of the Communist Party of the Philippines. To demonstrate, the CPP is the highest or the main body of the CPP-NPA in the Philippines. Below the national level is obviously the regional level. In Mindanao, specifically, in Northern Mindanao, the CPP established a sub-committee called the Northern Mindanao Commission. Under the Northern Mindanao Commission is the Provincial Committee which is in-charged in the guerrilla fronts established within the province (Dayta, 2007).

The Provincial Committee in Northern Mindanao Commission is composed of six (6) committees namely: Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, and Surigao del Sur. Each of the committees is assigned with guerrilla fronts. Specifically, FGU6 was under Bukidnon Provincial Committee; FGU4B and FGU 12 was under Misamis Oriental Provincial Committee; FGU 4A and Front 21 was under Agusan Del Norte; FGU8 was under Agusan del Sur; FGU16 was under Surigao Del Norte and; FGU 14 was under Surigao del Sur. In the case of Manticao, the NPA of the municipality was under the Northern Mindanao Commission of Misamis Oriental Provincial Committee, Front Guerrilla Unit 12.

### ***Membership and Roles***

The members of the NPA in Manticao like the others come from different sectors of the society. It was composed of the marginalized sector of the society (e.g. farmer, fishermen, laborers, etc.), students (secondary and tertiary levels), priests, seminarians, and church workers, former and deserted soldiers, and among others. Accordingly, there are four (4) common characteristics that a member of the NPA should possess and must continue to possess. One, poor coming from the farmers, fishermen, and laborer sectors. Two, has a good background meaning not involved in any criminal activity or must at least be of good standing in the community. Three, willing to commit to the movement. Four, he was educated by the party (Dayta, 2007). Once qualified, they will either become a *masa*, *hukbo*, unit commanders, medics, and an *uksi*.

The *Grupong Pangmasa* (GP), commonly known as *masa* is organized under the Committee of the Barangay or *Komite sa Balangay* (KOMBAL) comprising the youth, women, and men. The *masa* are not official members of the CPP. They only support the party and its activities within their area. They provide them financial, logistical, tactical, and intelligence, among others. Specifically, as members of the GP, every couple was compelled to give 4.50 pesos and two (2) salmon of rice every week (INM6). Accordingly, the financial and logistical support that the *masa* should give to the party was fixed and controlled by the party itself. However, in the case of Manticao, few members of the NPA based the contribution of a *masa* to their income. Some of them were asked to give one (1) sack of rice, ten (10) rims of cigarettes, and among others (INM9). For those residents who own a store, they usually give more than what the party asked from



them. However, it was not voluntary; most of them provide to keep themselves alive and their business operating (INM21).

In Manticao, specifically in Tuod, a few of the prominent families who provided big time financial and logistical support to the NPA in the municipality were: a man named Ondoy, Etsing (Chinese), Pilar, and Yurong. These individuals were large store owners in Tuod (INM5). Due primarily to fear of being killed and to keep their business in operation they supported the NPA in Manticao by providing food, cigarettes, money, and logistics.

The members of the *hukbo* (armed men) of the NPA in Manticao underwent an evaluation by the higher organ. Accordingly, before a *masa* becomes a member of the *hukbo*, he will be evaluated by the higher organ. The evaluation will be based on the following criteria: (1) Is there recruitment or expansion?; (2) Is there regular giving of revolutionary month dues; (3) Are they strong in their commitment to the movement and; (4) Have they experienced trials and have they not revealed important details of the group? If he satisfies the said criteria, he will join the group in the mountain (Dayta, 2007).

The *Hukbo Armado* is usually composed of a three (3) platoon. Under each were the squads of at least three (3) in each platoon. Each squad has at least three (3) Militia ng Bayan (MB). The company normally has the following units, namely: the Medical Unit, Liaison Unit, and the Sparrow Unit. The Sparrow Unit is considered the elite unit that performs a commando type operation on special cases (Dayta, 2007).

In Manticao, the *Hukbo Armado* was commonly composed of teenagers and young adults, between sixteen to twenty-one (16-21) years old. Majority of them were men and few women. They can be a student, out-of-school youth, rich, poor, a deserter, and a government turncoat. Ideally, a military deserter or someone with experience to any military training led the army. It was not also necessary that their leader and comrades know each other and residents of the same municipality (INM20).

The unit commanders of the NPA should possess certain characteristics and qualities of that of a leader. In Manticao, two of its unit commanders had a pseudonym of “ka Darius” and “ka Waslo”. Both of them were military deserters and professionals. They were highly intelligent, educated, good public speakers, and former university students. There were also unit commanders who served as “lecturers” or recruiters like ‘ka Mario and ‘ka Jr. These commanders had an average social status. Magdali was known by a few residents in Manticao as a farmer. He was also known by them as a brutal and soulless leader. He kills suspected spies and outlaws (NPA rules) without due process. Meanwhile, ‘ka Junior was a former military trainee who was abused by his commander. Although they carry different personal backgrounds, it was certain that they were former students and effective public speakers (INM19).

Aside from the unit commanders, the *Hukbong Armado* is also composed of the Medical Unit and the Auxiliary Unit. The members of the NPA medical team were ideally the dropped-out female medical students. Oftentimes, they accompany the *hukbo* during operations. Sometimes they stay in their camp to heal their sick and wounded comrades (INF5).

The role of the medics was not confined to providing first aid. They also hold meetings of their collective where they plan and confer on such concerns that affect the health of those in the movement, daily massage those in the SYP, administer herbal medication to those in the movement especially those that needs it, did acupuncture with those in the movement, circumcise children of the masses, prepare herbal syrup (*lagundi, lemonsito, mayana, kalabo*) and ginger tea (*salabat*), provide first aid or surgical procedures with those hit during encounters and even those with cysts, and extract teeth (Dayta, 2007).

The auxiliary unit of the NPA, commonly known as *uksi*, on the other hand, served as the liaison of the army. They are usually composed of kids like at age ten to fifteen (10-15). Their main task was to deliver *komon* (letter) from their unit to its respective receiver on foot. One of the qualities that they must possess is their familiarity with the route, especially the secret routes. On top of that, they should be fast and physically fit to accomplish their task (INM20).

Similar to the organizational structure of the NPA in Manticao or the CPP-NPA as a whole, the members or recruits of the communist group were given their specific role based on their character and skill. They were meticulously picked and assigned by the group. Such a rigid process denotes that the underground movement followed a careful screening and acceptance of their members. However, there could also be lapses to their process. Aside from their innate qualities, all members of the *Hukbong Armado* underwent training before they were assigned in their specific units.

### ***Training, Tactics, and Discipline***

The CPP-NPA adopted guerrilla warfare. Unlike the military, their training was indigenous and basic. Accordingly, the members of the group were trained based on the unit that they belong to. The Semi-Legal Team (SLT) where the so-called “lecturers” belong were educated about issues that may be useful to their works. Some of them were trained in Iligan in seventeen (17) days (INM7).

On the other hand, the cadres of the *hukbo* were trained in four (4) aspects namely: ideological, political, organization, and military. They got their training at a place in Baungon, Bukidnon. In an ideological training, they were to obtain the courses: education on the history of the Philippines, the party, the armed group, the constitution of the party, people's democratic revolution, peoples democratic governance, *5 ka Bulawanong Bidlisiw*, Basic Cadre Course, Basic Party Course, Advance Course on the Party, Socialism and the like. In their political training, they have to obtain the courses: mass work, party strategies and tactics, national situationnaire, assessment, summary, social investigation, and advanced course on agriculture. To achieve their organization training, they have to take the course, managing the cadres, managing the correct and wrong thoughts, democratic centralism, policies and rules of the party. The training of a *hukbo* will be completed when they finish the courses: basic and advanced military course, positioning and maneuvering, targeting, physical movement and exercise, homemade bomb and mapping. Specifically, they were taught to dismantle

firearms with or without blindfold, formation, ambush techniques, shooting and marksmanship, and the like. They were also taught tiger jumps, rappel, advance shooting, maneuverings, intelligence works, how to defuse and make bombs, and among others (Dayta, 2007).

Communication was one of the important tactics of the *hukbo*. Accordingly, the army has a telephone, but only the unit leader possesses it. During operations which they usually do at night, they will wait and follow the commands of their leader before taking action (INM7).

The CPP-NPA has sets of principles and discipline. Their justice system is further explained by C. Dayta in his book, "Walay Sapatos." Accordingly, the justice system of the CPP-NPA is called *Hukomang Bayan*. It will conduct trials against anybody in the movement whether you are *hukbo*, NPA, *masa*, etc. It will be composed as soon as the higher organ will make a complaint before it. They were usually composed of three to five (3-5) select cadres of the movement.

The crimes that are punishable by death are as follows: *giunay ang imong kauban* (adulterous acts), financial opportunism involving P30,000.00 up money, *gilayas ang armas* (stealing of firearms), *nagpasakit sa masa* (abuse the *masa* or civilian), *midagan ka panahon sa gubat* (retreated during an encounter), and rape. Upon complaint, the cadres will collect the necessary data which will then be submitted to the higher organ. Upon favorable decision, the accused will be given a trial in the *hukomang bayan* (Dayta, 2007).

The accused or the complainant can choose whom among his comrades to assist him as counsel. Although both counsel and fiscal are not like the Courts of Law that must be persons of Law meaning have graduated or are members of the bar but are learned on the rules of the party sufficient to prosecute or defend him during trial. It will proceed from the reading of the accusations and follows the answers and trial. Parties will be allowed to present witnesses. Accused will be presumed innocent until proven guilty (Dayta, 2007).

Men and women cadres were prohibited to engage in a romantic relationship. Moreover, they were not allowed to sleep together. Furthermore, the *masa* were prohibited to do the following: stealing, backbiting, committing infidelity, drinking, scolding one's child, and among others. On top of that, they were compelled to kill their dogs for the security of the NPA and to give them food and shelter (INM15).

Despite the fact that the CPP-NPA adopted guerrilla warfare, they also provided and conducted training to their members. On top of that, they have their own justice system, however, this was criticized by some of the NPA returnees and even the *masa*. They believe that there was no justice in the justice system of the NPA because not everyone was given the opportunity to defend themselves and "death" is their ultimate justice. On top of that, there were high-ranking cadres of the group who defied their rules but received no punishment.

### ***Food and Armaments***

One of the common struggles of the CPP-NPA was a stable source of food supply. In Manticao, the NPA struggled to procure food. They heavily rely on the

support or the revolutionary tax of the *masa*. However, apart from them, there were individuals of high position who gave them food and logistical assistance (INM7).

The majority of the *hukbo* were informed that they have limited supplies of guns. As a matter of fact, most of them carry a garand and carbine. Garand rifle is a semi automatic, gas-operated .30 calibre rifle while carbine is a long gun that has a barrel shortened from its original length. However, according to INM7 the army had several high-powered guns such as: armalite, machine gun, M14, M16, and among others. On top of that, they rarely lack ammunition (INM7).

The *hukbo* also obtain weapons through ambush and stealing. Ideally, they ambushed the military engineering brigade and those who transport their weapons. Aside from guns, they also steal their clothes, food, and everything useful to them. Upon a successful operation, they will return to their camp or find another (INM19).

### ***Routes and Encampments***

The NPA in Manticao commonly walk back and forth in the hinterlands of Lugait, Manticao, Initao, Opol, and Bukidnon. According to INM7, this was the route that they used to follow:

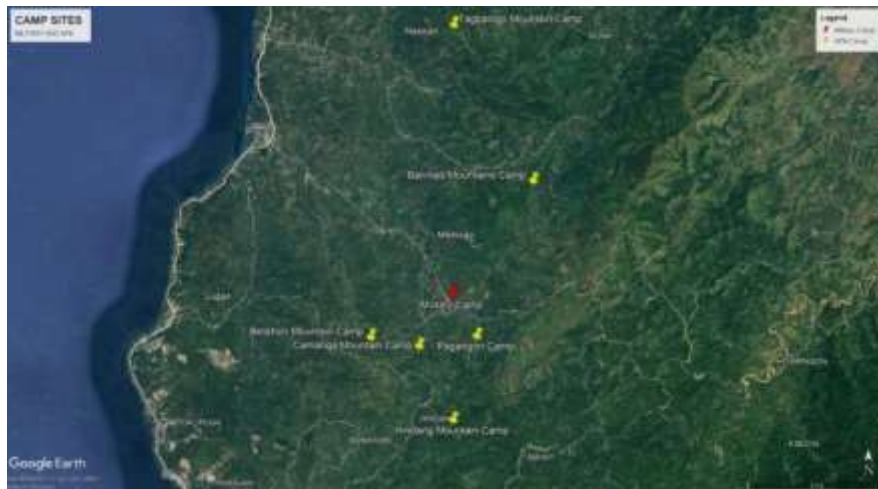
*Dool raman kaayo ni diri hike-on o, adto ra gani mi mamahaw. Kanang buntod diha, agi-anan mana sa una og rebelde. Mahayag -- naay dalan dira sa karsada maoy agianan namo pudulong sa Lugait. Lugait-Mahayag-Tumpagon-Quilablab- Bukidnon. Dali raman kaayo baklayon. Gikan ka diri sa alas 4, didto ramo mamahaw mga alas 7 bast walay kakulian. Mao nay likayan.*

[It is very near. We even travel this route on foot. We can even have our breakfast there. A mountain in Mahayag used to be one of the routes of the NPA to Lugait. Roughly, we used this route, Lugait-Mahayag-Tumpagon-Opol-Bukidnon. Without any conflict along our way, if we travel from Manticao at 4:00 AM we will arrive in Bukidnon at 7:00 AM.]<sup>75</sup>



**Figure 1.** Route Used by the NPA in Manticao (Google Earth)

When it comes to their camps, they did not stay in one place. They transferred from one camp to another. They usually stationed their camp in the deep forest (INM19).



**Figure 2.** NPA Campsites in Manticao (Google Earth)

An establish camp, is safer as the response of a *masa* in the certain area is positive. Positive in a sense that only a few to none military spies and camps are near in the area. INM7 recounted.

*Daghan oy! Anang Pagangon, anang budto diha. Naa pud gani diha o, sa Tagbalugo. Diha Camanga, Hindang, Bitahon, Balintad...kanang naay sundalo, dili mi dira. Dali rapud mi.*

[We had several camps. In the mountains of Pagangon, Tagbalugo, Camanga, Hindang, Bitahon, and Balintad. We don't put up a camp that is near the military.]

The encampments of the NPA in Manticao have several purpose or functions. It is where the members of the communist group eat, sleep, train, and coordinate. At night, they sleep in rotation. A group will be assigned as the look-out of the area. Then, they will be replaced by another group who already had their sleep. After two to three (2-3) days, they will leave the place. While it is true that most of their camps were temporary, the NPA of Manticao, Initao, Lugait, and the other places in Misamis Oriental had their main camp in Dagobdob, a place of caves in Opol (INM7).

The fundamentals of the NPA are indeed organized and systematized. It successfully managed them to reach their pinnacle in 1983-1985. However, it is not the pinnacle years that one could ever expect.

#### **Pinnacle of the NPA in Manticao**

In the years, 1980-1982, members of the NPA in Manticao reached their zenith. However, their proliferation subsequently led to their discovery by the military. A year later, the 53rd Infantry Battalion (53<sup>rd</sup> IB), a military detachment, was deployed in Tuod (INF1). It was located near or within the present location of the house of Macario Flores. Back then, the place had an empty house and a flat surface. Underneath its surface, there was a huge and wide underground. For a year or two, the place was the camp of the 53rd IB (INM19).

The deployment of the military in Tuod, the hinterlands of Manticao was under a "strategic hamletting." Strategic hamletting was used by the military to defeat the NPA by depriving them of their 'mass base' or support from the civilians. It is also described as "draining the pond to catch the fish" strategy. Thus, the uplands of Manticao, especially those which were considered as NPA stronghold areas were subject to military operations. The military operations led to the 'great exodus' or series of relocation and evacuation of the civilians. The places that they left were referred to as "ghost areas". These ghost areas then become a "no man's land" or a free-fire zone. Anybody found or seen within the area was assumed to be an NPA. Consequently, the strategic hamletting of the military did not just deprived the NPA of civilian support but it also led to the arrest and imprisonment of its few members. There were few of them who willingly

or forcefully divulged information about their underground movement (Escalona and Galgo, 2003).

Aside from the military strategic hamletting, the discovery of the NPA like in Manticao was due to their Deep Penetration Agents (DPA). These DPAs successfully infiltrated the units of the NPA during their mass recruitment in 1981-1982. In those years, the conservative approach to revolutionary growth was replaced by more relaxed recruitment and organizational criteria. In return, the ideological training of its cadres and activists become deficient. The quality of the new recruits declined both in the political and ideological standard as if they lack education by the SLT, for instance. With this condition, the DPAs successfully infiltrated the movement. (Abinales, undated).

The existence of the military DPAs in the NPA was later discovered in 1985 with the arrest of three (3) suspected DPAs in Cagayan de Oro City. These DPAs did not just confess to being spies but they also revealed that the leaders of the regional committee of the CPP-NPA were government spies. Their confession stirred distrust and paranoia among the group which led to the infamous *Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos* (*Kahos*) or Operation Zombie (Sarmiento, 2003).

The *Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos* (*Kahos*) was an anti-infiltration purge campaign of the CPP-NPA in 1985. *Ahos* was used as a metaphor due to its potency in repelling evil spirits and *demonyos* (demons), which was how the military was commonly described by the party. It is also known as a witch-hunting frenzy of the underground movement. It began in the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon but quickly spread throughout Mindanao. Its caretaker group used inhumane methods to elicit testimonies from the captured suspected DPAs. Within a six-month period, 950 cadres, guerrillas, and activists were executed for being *demonyo* suspects. The dislocation was massive—in nine (9) months party membership declined from nine thousand to a mere three thousand (9000-3000) due to resignation, surrender, or AWOL; the NPA was reduced from fifteen or sixteen (15-16) companies to a mere two (2), supported by seventeen (17) platoons; and the CPP lost over fifty (50) percent of its mass base. In the case of Manticao, the previously mentioned events created unimaginable chaos and left unforgettably painful memories to the locals. Below were their stories (Abinales, undated).

### ***Displacement***

Apart from “No Man’s Land” incidents which were already discussed by M. Ratunil in his undergraduate thesis, the stories of relocation or evacuation of the residents of Manticao is also noteworthy.

Before the declaration of the military that a certain barangay is subject to “no man’s land” or free-fire zone, the residents were compelled to vacate the area. There were residents who quickly followed the command of the army while the others were apprehensive to vacate their place. Leaving their place meant that their farm and livestock would be kept unattended. However, to keep themselves

away from crossfire and suspicion they ended up abiding the rule of the military (INM9).

In the case of Camanga, the residents of Patulangon and Talibong evacuate in their *sentro* (Purok 1). Before vacating their place, the affected residents tend to sell their livestock like hogs, chickens, cows, and the like which were bought at a very low price. While some of the residents brought their carabao and goat with them. Unfortunately, there were armies instead of buying their animals they would ask them for free. After taking care of their livestock, the residents will pack their daily necessities. Some of them will harvest their unripened banana, unseasoned rice and corn, vegetables, and fruits to sustain themselves in the evacuation area. Before sunset, when they were ready, they walked on foot heading to *sentro* carrying their kids and belongings with them (INM12).

The other town of barangay Camanga, Naga (Purok 6) its residents in the onset of the chaos initially evacuated in the wilderness of their town only at nighttime. Afraid to be caught between the crossfires of the military and the NPA, they slept in the wilderness of their town. In the morning, they come down to their house to replenish themselves with food and sleep. For some time, they go and come back to their house as exactly as they leave it. Until one time, when they came home from the forest in the morning they were shocked by the blood of hogs scattered in their town. Suspiciously, the direction of the blood was going to Tuod where the military camp was situated and not the other way around. They suspected that it might be the military who did the act, however, it might also be the NPA (INF6).

On top of that, the residents fell on their knees when they realized that the house of three (3) of their neighbors were burned to ashes. They were also uncertain who did it. Due to these incidents, they decided to evacuate to Tuod where the military was near. Some of them decided to build a makeshift house in the barangay. Similarly, they went to their home at day-time for their farm, livestock, and to get supplies and come back at nighttime. For a year, this was the kind of life they had before the downturn of the communist insurgency in the municipality in 1986 (INM12).

When it comes to the residents of barangay Digkilaan, despite the declaration of the place as a “no man’s land” there were few of them who decided to remain in their house. Two (2) of them were former *masa* of the NPA in Manticao. These two (2) families used to live in the most interior part of the Digkilaan, specifically in Waguron (Purok 3). They believe that the military will not reach and know their place, but they did. They were extremely afraid when the military found them. However, their situation convinced the army. Apparently, each of the wives of these families had recently given birth to their eldest child. It was hard and impractical for them to vacate their house knowing that their newly born child was only days old and their wives can barely walk. Therefore, they decided to stay in their house and accepted whatever it is that fate will bring to them. Afterwards, the military left them while they stayed vigilant (INM6).

Majority of the residents in Digkilaan evacuated to either Tuod and Poblacion. Similar to the residents of Camanga, they sell their livestock which were unfairly bought at a cheaper price by their neighbor. While some of them brought



their carabaos, cows, goats, and among others to the evacuation area in Tuod. Meanwhile, those who stayed in Poblacion were sheltered in the covered court and plaza of the municipality together with the other evacuees from the other barangays.<sup>21</sup> Food was the common problem of the evacuees in the areas. Unfortunately, the food supply given by the local government was not enough and cannot sustain them in the long run. Therefore, a few of the residents decided to quickly go back to their original place to get food and other necessities (INF5).

Indeed, evacuation due to the military strategic hamletting severely affected the lives of the residents in Manticao. However, given the situation of that time, a few of them believe that it was for their own good despite their struggles and losses.

### ***Infamous Incidents***

Deaths of a few residents of Manticao was one of the horrors of the zenith of the NPA in Manticao. These loss of lives were sudden and its perpetrators, most of them unidentified. One of these incidents was the death of a married couple which took place in Waguron, Digkilaan (INM5).

The incident occurred on Friday, *tabo* day of barangay Tuod. The couple owned a sari-sari store, hence they bought several groceries like two to three (2-3) sacks of rice, canned goods, noodles, hog pellets, meat and fish for their consumption, and among others. Their carabao carried these groceries back to their home in Mainit. Unfortunately, an unidentified man in Waguron forcibly stole their groceries including their carabao. Afterwards, they brutally killed the couple. Some of the residents believe that the incident was done by one of the leaders of the NPA in Manticao, 'ka Mario and his men (INM8).

In the same place, three (3) residents of the town were also killed namely: Wana, Leoning, and Baslo. The reason and the perpetrators of their death were unknown. In addition, the death of a man who had a last name of Calunod and his wife was also killed in the same place. It was also in Waguron that the death of a man named Pilo took place. Pilo was known in the town of Naga as a reporter of the military in a sense that he carelessly reported someone to them as a member of the NPA. This agitated both the civilians and the real members of the movement (INF6).

The killing of human lives in Manticao in 1984 also occurred in barangay Tuod and Patulangon. In the case of the former, a brother of a woman named Lumin was shot by an unknown person. It occurred in their house near the town's bridge. Some of the residents suspected the military as the perpetrator of the act. In the case of the latter, a man named Emillano Jalagat and Pipot Tamong were killed (INM7).

While it is true that the reason and perpetrators of these killing incidents were unknown and unidentified it can be linked to the internal struggle of the CPP-NPA which led to the "*Operasyon Ahos or Zombie*". The Anti-Infiltration Purge campaign of the party was one of the factors that led to the downturn of the NPA in Manticao.

## Exodus of the NPA in Manticao

### *Last Encounter*

The decline of the NPA in Manticao was primarily caused by two (2) reasons. One, the *Kampanyang Ahos* of the CPP-NPA which led to the betrayals and massive deaths of the party's cadres schemed by its members of high positions. Second, the frequent counterinsurgency campaigns and operations of the AFP.

The impact of the *Operasyon Ahos* rippled in the NPA units in Manticao. At this time, the district commander of the Front 12 was the man named Wilson Waslo. Waslo was once a military of the Philippine government who became a member of the underground movement. On the other hand, the majority of the informants of the study believed that he was a DPA of the military. Their suspicion aroused when Waslo called a meeting some time in 1985 in the hinterlands of Manticao and the attendees were unable to return. Adding insult to the injury, there were few cadres of the communist group who were killed by a gunshot at the back of their head which implies betrayal (INM7).

The suspicion of the cadres of the NPA in Manticao was confirmed when Waslo called a meeting with all the NPA units under Front 12 in Dagobdob. To reiterate, Dagobdob was one of the major camps of the NPA in Misamis Oriental. At that time Waslo called for a meeting he advised the cadres to leave their armaments at a certain place distance away from the exact location of the camp (INM20). Little did they know that the government military were already stationed in both the uphill and downhill of the area. In a blink of an eye, the military began shooting the NPA in the area. Without their guns, the NPA were on the losing end. The incident resulted in approximately four thousand (4000?) fatalities coming from both the NPA and the military (INM19). The incident consequently weakened the presence of the NPA in Misamis Oriental like in Manticao. Aside from the incident in Dagobdob, the victory of President Cory Aquino in the EDSA People Power Revolution hastened the decline of the NPA in Manticao.

### *Reconciliation*

When Cory Aquino won the presidential election on 25 February 1986, she appealed to the NPA to surrender. She implemented peace talks to the communist group. In the case of the NPA in Manticao, the 53<sup>rd</sup> IB conducted the so-called "*Operasyon Pulongpulong*."

The primary goal of the *Operasyon Pulong-pulong* was to educate the residents of the locality about the NPA, communism and the possible impact if the CPP-NPA will govern the Philippines. In this goal, the *masa* were called to a meeting known as "*pulong-pulong*" by the military. From there, they personally interviewed the *masa* about their experience and everything that they know about the underground movement. Gradually, the presence of the NPA in Manticao weakened coupled by the surrender of its members (INM21).

In general, the formation, growth, and decline of the NPA in Manticao was motivated by several factors. One may pinpoint the adverse effect of Martial Law which is manifested in the human rights abuses of the military personnel of the Philippine government. However, it can be also inferred that the formation of the underground movement in the municipality was a by-product of the communist expansion in Misamis Oriental through the effective recruitment strategy of the SLT. Meanwhile, its decline was brought by the irregularities of the party itself and the victory of Cory Aquino as the new president of the Philippine republic.

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The surrender of the two (2) members of the CTG-NPA in Manticao on 8 June 2023 stirred a possibility that the municipality was once infiltrated by the communist group. The study investigated the possibility by re-examining the history of the NPA in Manticao, with emphasis to the factors that led to its formation and decline.

The data of the study revealed that an NPA unit was established in Manticao in 1980. The said NPA unit was technically called Front Guerrilla Unit 12 (FGU12) under the Misamis Oriental Provincial Committee of the Northern Mindanao Commission. Apparently, the establishment of FGU12 in the municipality was influenced by several factors.

The geographical landscape of Manticao is one of the factors that influenced the establishment of an NPA unit in the municipality. Accordingly, the hinterlands of Manticao have rugged terrain, mountains of high elevation, and forest of thick natural cover. On top of that, majority of the mountainous barangays of Manticao like Digkilaan, Camanga, Pagawan, Upper Malubog, and among others shared common borders to the neighboring barangays of Lugait (Aya-Aya, Hindang, and Betahon) and Iligan City (Bunawan) which were also infiltrated by the NPA. In simpler terms, aside from natural barriers and protection, the hinterlands of Manticao naturally provided the NPA with access to other municipalities for easy coordination and mobilization.

In addition, the socio-economic landscape of Manticao before the declaration of Martial Law motivated the formation of an NPA unit in the municipality. To reiterate, there were approximately thirteen thousand (13, 000) residents in Manticao before the declaration of Martial Law in 1972. Majority of these residents are Roman Catholic and literate. In fact, 52% of them were working while the remaining 48% were dependents. Moreover, the economic condition of the municipality was slowly progressing and the majority of the residents of the municipality heavily rely on fishing and farming. For the NPA, the socio-economic condition of Manticao before the Martial Law era was ideal for them to establish a unit. It is ideal in a sense that they can conduct their recruitment activities to the locals with lesser risks knowing that it was sparsely populated. To add, most of the residents of Manticao were literate hence, they can possibly understand the goals of the underground movement. Furthermore, the progressing economic condition of Manticao may provide assistance to them, especially in terms of food support. Significantly, the fact that the majority of the residents were farmers who

presumably suffered from the debt crisis during Martial Law, they become the main target of the NPA recruiters aside from asking them for food. Therefore, the Manticaoons become susceptible to the NPA.

The consequences brought by the proclamation of Martial Law on 21 September 1972 by president Ferdinand Marcos Sr. ignited the establishment of an NPA unit in Manticao. The human rights abuses of the military of the Philippine government were the striking effect of Martial Law that led to the establishment of FGU12. Accordingly, in 1982, the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion (IB) was deployed in Tuod, Manticao. However, their deployment in the barangay did not bring peace and security to the locals. In fact, the majority of the military personnel of the said battalion were abusive to the locals, especially those who were suspected as members of the NPA. Without proper investigation, they abused them by torturing them to the extent of using their hands as ashtrays. Eventually, the victims of their abuses seek revenge beside the NPA. However, the start of the NPA in Manticao was specifically founded not by the victims of the abuses of the military but rather by a Catholic priest.

The NPA in Manticao was founded by a Catholic priest, Fr. "A". While the growth of its members was spearheaded by one of his students, 'ka Mario. Fr. A was a priest of Irish descent. He was ordained as a priest on 21 September 1981 under the Columban religious order. Later on, he was assigned to the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro City and then to the parish of Manticao. As a priest, he was friendly to the people around him. In fact, he was active in pro-life groups— a non-profit organization of citizens who are concerned about issues pertaining to the inherent value and dignity of human life. On the other hand, 'ka Mario was a sacristan of Fr. A who eventually becomes an NPA through his influence. Accordingly, 'ka Mario was one of his students who received his lectures about the injustices of human life, communism, and the CPP-NPA. With his excellent speaking skills 'ka Mario became the key figure of the recruitment for NPA members in Manticao. Eventually, in 1980, an NPA unit—FGU12 was formed in Manticao. In 1981-1982, members of the communist group tremendously increased. However, the growth of its members led to its eventual decline. In 1983, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion (IB) of the Philippine government was deployed in Tuod. Their ultimate task was to eliminate the NPA in Manticao. They employed a strategy called "Strategic Hamletting" which compelled the residents of the municipality to evacuate to the designated evacuation areas. This strategy was also called "draining the pond to catch the fish".

In addition, in the same year, the *Operasyon Ahas*— anti-infiltration purge campaign of the CPP-NPA was launched to eliminate the suspected Deep Penetration Agents (DPAs) of the party. The campaign resulted in the massive death of NPA cadres all-over the Philippines. Consequently, it disrupted and weakened the NPA in Manticao. Significantly, the victory of president Corazon Aquino in 1986 as the new president of the Philippines led to the mass surrender of the NPA members in Manticao.

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**Key Informant Interview (KII)**

<b>Name (Code)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position Held</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
INM1	60	<i>Masa</i> and relative of a former NPA Armado	Camanga	March 11, 2024
INM2	57	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	March 11, 2024
INM3	54	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	March 11, 2024
INM4	40	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	March 11, 2024
INM5	67	<i>Masa</i> and former barangay official in 1980	Tuod	March 10, 2024
INM6	70	<i>Masa</i>	Digkilaan	March 10, 2024
INM7	68	NPA <i>Hukbo</i> or Armado	Tuod	March 10, 2024
INM8	32	Friend of a NPA <i>Hukbo</i> or Armado	Tuod	March 6, 2024
INM9	74	<i>Masa</i>	Upper Malubog	February 24, 2024
INM10	67	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	February 24, 2024
INM11	65	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	February 18, 2024
INM12	82	Former CHDF and <i>Masa</i> of the NPA	Camanga	February 4, 2024
INM13	66	Former NPA Revolutionary Tax Collector	Tuod	February 4, 2024
INM14	43	Worker of former NPA commanders	Tuod	February 4, 2024

INM15	81	<i>Masa</i>	Upper Malubog	February 4, 2024
INM16	70	<i>Masa</i> and a brother of a former NPA <i>uksi</i>	Digkilaan	February 4, 2024
INM17	70	<i>Masa</i>	Digkilaan	June 12, 2023
INM18	66	<i>Masa</i> and a brother of former NPA Armados	Camanga	June 7, 2023
INM19	59	Former NPA <i>hukbo</i> or armado	Camanga	June 12, 2023
INM20	54	Former NPA <i>uksi</i>	Upper Malubog	June 12, 2023
INM21	60	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	June 12, 2023
INM22	58	<i>Masa</i>	Digkilaan	February 4, 2024
INM23	54	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	February 4, 2024
INM24	60	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	February 4, 2024
INF1	69	<i>Masa</i>	Camanga	March 11, 2024
INF2	55	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	March 10, 2024
INF3	58	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	February 28, 2024
INF4	60	<i>Masa</i>	Digkilaan	February 4, 2024
INF5	55	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	February 3, 2024
INF6	59	<i>Masa</i>	Tuod	June 12, 2023

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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