

ANDRES BONIFACIO

Biographical notes

Part V: November 17, 1896 –
March 21, 1897



17 Nov
1896

Bonifacio arrives in Bacoor, Cavite together with his wife, his brothers Procopio and Ciriaco, Emilio Jacinto and a small detachment of soldiers headed by General Lucino de la Cruz.¹ They are welcomed to the liberated zone by Emilio Aguinaldo, the Captain General (*Pangulong Digma*) of the Magdalo council, who accompanies them to Imus, sitting beside Bonifacio in a carriage (*carretela*). Arriving in the late afternoon, they proceed directly to the *bahay hacienda* – the Magdalo’s headquarters – where they are greeted by many of the council’s leaders.

Bonifacio, his wife and brothers are then taken to the house of Juan Castañeda, a *capitan pasado* of Imus who was then in prison, facing charges of rebellion. Castañeda’s wife, Andrea Monson, gives them supper, and they stay there for the night.²

18 Nov
1896

The leaders of the Magdiwang council – including Mariano Alvarez, Santiago Alvarez and Artemio Ricarte – came to Imus, and the leaders of both councils then attended a reception to celebrate the Supremo’s arrival. Aguinaldo recalls that the mood was joyful and convivial.³

Ricarte, on the other hand, remembers a tense moment. Together with the Magdalo leaders that morning was a Katipunero from Laguna, a lawyer named Vicente Fernandez, who back in August had promised Bonifacio that “he would mobilize support in the districts (*“pagtulong mula sa purok”*) of Morong and Laguna for the planned attack on Manila. But he had not fulfilled his promise. He did nothing, Ricarte says, in the area under his command (*“di gumawa ng anoman sa purok na napailalim sa kanyang kapangyarihan”*), and for this failure Bonifacio placed the entire blame for the ignominious defeat on August 30 in San Juan del Monte on Fernandez’s head (*“napataw sa kanyang ulo ang buong pananagutan tungkol sa kadusta-*

dustang pagkabigo sa San Juan del Monte.”)

When he saw Fernandez in Imus, Bonifacio instantly ordered his arrest and investigation for dereliction of duty. But the Magdalo leaders, says Ricarte, treated his order as a joke, and did nothing. Almost as soon as he had arrived in Cavite, Ricarte notes, Bonifacio realized his authority was not respected by the Magdalo council.⁴

Around midday, Bonifacio and his companions set off in *carretelas* from Imus for the Magdiwang town of Noveleta, about seven kilometers to the west. They are escorted by leaders from both councils, including Aguinaldo, and people gather by the road to cheer the procession. When they reach Noveleta, they are greeted by fireworks and volleys of rifle fire.

After lunch, Bonifacio and Jacinto are taken in a luxurious carriage pulled by a white horse to inspect the defences built around the town. Accompanying the carriage – front and rear, left and right – is an honor guard of uniformed cavalry.

Later in the afternoon, carriages take Bonifacio and his companions on the final leg of their journey, from Noveleta to the Magdiwang “capital,” San Francisco de Malabon.⁵ The people have been told Bonifacio is coming, and have put up banners and bamboo arches along the road. As Bonifacio’s carriage passes, they shout “Long live the Supremo!” and “Long Live the King!”, and he shouts back “Long Live the Motherland!” As the procession nears the town, it is met by a brass band, and the church bells are rung. The parish priest, himself a Katipunero, greets Bonifacio at the church door, and inside the choir sings the Te Deum to give thanks for his safe arrival.⁶

In the evening, Bonifacio and (presumably) his wife and two brothers are welcomed to the house of Santos Nocon, a general in the Magdiwang army, where they will stay for about a month.



- Nov 1896 Over the following days, Bonifacio visits all the towns in the Magdiwang council’s territory, meeting the local leaders and being greeted everywhere by cheering crowds, brass bands and pealing bells. People behaved, Aguinaldo later remarked, “as if the real King of the Country had arrived” [*“kaya’t gayon na lamang karingal ang pagtanggap sa kanila at para bagang isang Haring Bayan nga ang dumating.”*]⁷
- 12 Dec 1896 Bonifacio writes to the High Military Council of the Northern District, mentioning the warm welcome he had been given when he had first arrived in Cavite. But the acclaim with which he had been honored, he sadly observes, had awakened in a few hearts the worm of envy [*“uod ng kaingitan”*], and already he had become the target of falsehoods and malicious intrigues. Rumors were being spread about “that I am a pawn of

the friars, and the traitors are making all sorts of other insinuations as weapons to destroy me..."⁸

Mostly, though, Bonifacio's letter is about military matters. Plans to capture the town of Pasig, he says, are progressing well and it is hoped to mount the attack soon. He hails a victory over a Spanish attack in Antipolo, and he endorses a decision taken by the High Military Council relating to the organization of the Katipunan's forces in Bulacan. He urges the Council to ensure that fighters are deployed along the whole route of the railroad so that the troops of the enemy get dispersed and are not able to form large concentrations."⁹



Bonifacio signs the letter as the President of the Sovereign Nation - "Ang Plo. ng Haringbayan". This is the earliest document yet found on which he uses that

title, and likewise the earliest document he has signed using his real name as well as his alias.

Dec 1896 Bonifacio moves, presumably together with his wife and two brothers, from Santos Nocon's house to the larger property of Estefania Potente, also located in the *población* of San Francisco de Malabon. They will stay in this house until early April 1897, and in effect it became Bonifacio's headquarters as well as his residence.¹⁰

13 Dec 1896 Camilo Polavieja takes over as Governor General from Ramón Blanco, who many Spaniards (including the friars) believed had not acted swiftly or forcefully enough to crush the insurrection. The Spanish army in the Philippines was now being strengthened by boatloads of infantrymen (*cazadores*) and a new high command from the Peninsula headed by General José Lachambre. Everybody knew that a major campaign would be launched against the revolutionists in Cavite within the next couple of months.



Governor General Camilo Polavieja



General Jose Lachambre

c. Dec 1896 Aguinaldo says he went to see Bonifacio in San Francisco de Malabon to ask him to order the Magdiwang army (which was then the larger of the two Katipunan armies in Cavite) to help the Magdalo forces resist the expected Spanish attack. Bonifacio refused, says Aguinaldo, saying that Magdiwang territory was facing the same imminent danger.¹¹

Dec 1896 In late December, says Ricarte, Bonifacio was visited by Edilberto Evangelista, an *ilustrado* who had joined the Magdalo army soon after returning to the Philippines from Belgium, where he had been studying

civil engineering. Evangelista read out a constitution he had drafted for the nation, based on the 1893 Spanish decree that had reorganized local government in the Philippines. Bonifacio listened, but was not impressed. Filipinos, he reportedly told Evangelista, could write a better constitution themselves. To rely on a Spanish model, he said, would be a disgrace.¹²

MAGDIWANG LEADERS



SANTIAGO ALVAREZ
Captain General
(Pangulong Digma)



MARIANO ALVAREZ
President



ARTEMIO RICARTE
Deputy Captain General
(Pangalawang Pangulong Digma)

Late Dec
1896

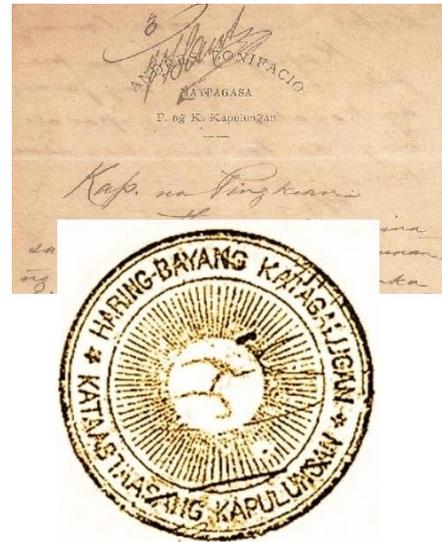
Bonifacio presides over an *“asamblea magna”* at the *casa hacienda* in Imus. Aside from Magdalo and Magdiwang representatives, the assembly is attended by revolutionists from other provinces who had sought refuge in Cavite.¹³

The assembly has been instigated by the Magdalo leaders, who want the two councils in Cavite to be reorganized as a single government, and the two armies to be integrated under a single command.¹⁴ Some of the revolutionists from other provinces, and perhaps also a few Magdiwang leaders, take the same view.¹⁵ But the assembly is divided. Most of the Magdiwang delegates favor the continuation of the existing structure, based on the constitution of the Katipunan. Magdalo delegates and others, however, countered that the Katipunan’s constitution was now outdated and inappropriate, because it had been framed and approved when the Katipunan was still a secret society. The revolution, they argued, had now become bigger than the Katipunan. Many fighters, and many of the revolution’s supporters, had never been KKK members.¹⁶ Neither, of course, had the vast majority of the citizens in the liberated zone.

After lengthy and heated exchanges, the assembly could not reach agreement on this key point. On both sides, Santiago Alvarez recalls, the *“my”* standpoint prevailed, not the *“our”* [*“bawa’t panig ay walang ibig kundi ang ‘akin’ at hindi ang ‘atin’.”*]¹⁷ The assembly’s only decision, Aguinaldo says, was to defer taking a decision.¹⁸

Nevertheless, the assembly did agree to appoint Bonifacio to head a *“legislative committee”* or *“congress”* (*“Lupung Tagapagbatas”* or *“Kapulungan”*) and to authorize him to appoint as its members *“some people he considered to be worthy”* (*“ilang taong inaakala niyang karapat-*

dapat").¹⁹ It is not known whether Bonifacio ever did appoint members to this body, or whether it ever met, but in the early months of 1897 he was using the title "President of the Supreme Congress" ("P. ng K. Kapulungan") and some of his communications were stamped with a seal bearing the words "Sovereign Nation of Katagalugan - Supreme Congress" ("Haring Bayang Katagalugan - Kataastaasang Kapulungan").²⁰ Even if the Congress never convened - due perhaps to the exigencies of war - it appears that Bonifacio believed it should convene when circumstances permitted, and that it would be a step towards establishing a revolutionary government.



Bonifacio asked Baldomero Aguinaldo (the Magdalo president, who was acting as the secretary of the assembly) to record the decision to form the Lupung Tagapagbatas or Kapulungan in the minutes of the meeting, and Aguinaldo agreed to do so. But the minutes never materialized, despite Bonifacio repeatedly reminding the Magdalo leaders that he needed them. The men of Magdalo, says Ricarte, always replied that the minutes would be sent to Bonifacio just as soon as those who had attended the assembly had signed them [*"ang mga kagawad na pamahalaang Magdalo ay lagi na rin naming sumasagot sa kanya, na kanilang ipadadala kailan ma't malagdaan ng mga dumalo sa naturang pagpupulong."*]²¹

MAGDALO LEADERS



EMILIO AGUINALDO
Captain General (Pangulong Digma)



BALDOMERO AGUINALDO
President



DANIEL TIRONA
Secretary of War

As the Imus assembly was drawing to a close, Paciano Rizal arrived, bringing the shocking news that his brother José was likely to be executed. Aguinaldo says he and Bonifacio had previously agreed that the Katipunan should attempt to rescue the hero, but Paciano thought such a mission would inevitably fail, and said his brother would not want others to sacrifice their lives on his behalf.²²

30 Dec 1896 José Rizal is executed at Bagumbayan.

2 Jan 1897 Bonifacio writes a brief note to Mariano Alvarez, president of the Magdiwang council: “Don’t fail to come at this very moment for I want to talk to you privately about what happened to me in Magdalo and so that you might explain their organization to me.”²³

Was he referring to the Imus assembly, or something else? We don’t know.

Early Jan 1897 In the weeks after Christmas, the slanderous allegations and intrigues against Bonifacio proliferate. Defamatory letters circulate in the towns. These hostile fictions said, amongst much else, that Bonifacio was an agent or *bata* (literally, “child”) of the friars, bribed by them to organize the Katipunan and lead the poorly armed Filipinos to certain and disastrous defeat. He communicated with the friars through his beautiful sister, who was the mistress of the Tondo parish priest. On the other hand, he was a mason, did not believe in God, and abhorred religion. He had little education, and had worked only as a lowly employee [*“hawak na utusan”*] in a German-owned warehouse. And so on.

Suspected of instigating the poisonous letters was Daniel Tirona, the Magdalo secretary of war. One day, Bonifacio saw Tirona at a house in San Francisco de Malabon, and confronted him. Tirona tried to dismiss the matter, but his attitude, Alvarez recounts, enraged Bonifacio, who drew his revolver and had to be dissuaded from shooting Tirona by Magdiwang president Mariano Alvarez and others.²⁴

c. Jan 1897 The town of San Francisco de Malabon celebrates the feast of its patron saint, St Francis of Assisi (which in normal times would have been celebrated in October). A decorated platform is erected outside the house where Bonifacio is staying, and in the evening he and several Magdiwang leaders address the festive crowds.²⁵

c. Jan 1897 News of Spanish troop movements near the northern and eastern borders of Cavite prompts Aguinaldo to visit Bonifacio again to discuss the strategy for resisting the coming offensive.

Given that the initial attacks were likely to be against Magdalo-held towns, Aguinaldo argues, it was there that the Katipunan forces – both Magdalo and Magdiwang – should first be concentrated. Bonifacio, however, disagrees, saying (according to Aguinaldo) that the Magdiwang territory could also be attacked at any time, and could be left defenseless if the Magdiwang’s troops were redeployed to the Magdalo towns. If the Magdalo’s forces were defeated by the Spaniards in the early battles, he says, they could retreat into Magdiwang territory, where the two armies could fight together.²⁶

c. Feb Once, Alvarez relates, the frictions between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo

1897

escalated to the brink of violence. One evening they left a meeting in San Francisco de Malabon together, Aguinaldo accompanied by Mariano Trias and Bonifacio by his brother Procopio. They then had an argument in an alleyway that grew so heated that all four leaders drew their guns and seemed ready for a shoot-out.

Alvarez and Ricarte, who presumably had also just left the meeting, saw the commotion and hurried over. They persuaded the four to go the house of Diego Mojica (the Magdiwang minister of finance) to talk, and then sent for the Katipunero parish priest to conciliate. The priest - who was Trias's cousin - urged the antagonists to embrace, and blessed them in the name of God and the Trinity.²⁷

13 Feb
1897

Bonifacio writes a letter to Julio Nakpil, who had succeeded Isidoro Francisco as the president of the Katipunan government in the "Northern District," the region to the north and east of the capital.

The letter mainly concerns a Spanish friar the Katipunan forces were then holding captive, Fr. Antonio Piernavieja, who prior to the revolution had been the chaplain at the *casa-hacienda* of Buenavista in the municipality of San Francisco de Malabon.²⁸ After the area was liberated from Spanish control in September 1896, some accounts say, Fr. Piernavieja was forced into acting as the "mock bishop" of revolutionary Cavite. To save his life, he accepted this indignity, but then collected information about the movements, plans, and strongholds of the Katipunan forces for passing on to his Order and the Spanish authorities.²⁹ Bonifacio says in his letter that he would be prepared to authorize Fr. Piernavieja's release if a suitably large ransom could be negotiated.

Bonifacio mentions in his letter that he has received a copy of the "*Himno Nacional*" that Nakpil had sent. Julio Nakpil later recalled that he composed this piece - also known as the "*Marangal na Dalit ng Katagalugan*" - at the request of Bonifacio when they were encamped with Katipunan troops in the vicinity of Balara in November 1896. Nakpil remembered the hymn still being played in Cavite and Laguna in 1898 but, as the history textbooks tell, Aguinaldo then chose as the national anthem a composition by Julian Felipe, originally titled the "*Marcha Filipina Magdalo*".³⁰

15-16 Feb
1897

The long-anticipated Spanish offensive begins with attacks near Bacoor in the northern border of the province and on the town of Silang in the south-east. The coastal town of Noveleta also comes under bombardment from gunboats in the bay.

Bacoor and Silang were both in the Magdalo's area of jurisdiction, and Magdalo commanders and troops were naturally at the forefront of their defense. Troops from Magdiwang towns, however, joined the fighting on both fronts. In Bacoor, these included a contingent under General Lucino de la Cruz from Bonifacio's own staff.³¹ In Silang, they included contingents under Col. Ambrosio Mojica from Indang; Major "Andoy" from San

Francisco de Malabon; and Capt. Hipolito Sakilayan from Alfonso.³²

19 Feb
1897

At this juncture, the Spaniards did not attempt to capture Bacoor or other towns in the north. General Lachambre's main thrust was in the east, and on February 19, after three days of heavy fighting, his 9,000-strong force entered Silang – the first town in the liberated zone to fall. The revolutionists were forced to withdraw when they ran out of ammunition.³³ More than 500 lay dead.³⁴

The Spanish *cazadores* razed the town to the ground, sparing only the church and *convento*, which they commandeered as a barracks.³⁵



In the first days of the offensive Bonifacio was in either San Francisco de Malabon or Noveleta, where the Katipuneros assumed the bombardment from the sea would be the prelude to an invasion by land.³⁶ After a few days of shelling, however, the Spanish warships sailed away, and the expected landings did not materialize.

c. 21 Feb
1897

Once that immediate danger has passed, Bonifacio decides to lead a Magdiwang force – together with Mariano Trias, Artemio Ricarte, Pascual Alvarez and others – to Silang, to make a joint attempt with Magdalo forces to recapture the town the Spaniards had just taken. Commanders from the two armies meet first in Buenavista (San Francisco de Malabon) and agree that the Magdalo troops should approach the *población* from the north, and the Magdiwang troops from the west and the south.³⁷

22 Feb
1897

The Magdalo and Magdiwang forces launch the counterattack on Silang around dawn, taking advantage of the thick early morning mist and the cover afforded by the surrounding forest. Ricarte recalls that Bonifacio, Trias, Pascual Alvarez and himself were positioned to the west, from which direction a Spanish account says there came a fusillade of cannon and rifle fire (“*un vigoroso fuego de lintaca y fusilería*”).³⁸ There was also intense gunfire from the Magdalo forces to the north. When the revolutionists advanced into the town center, however, they were overwhelmed by the Spanish infantry's greater numbers and superior firepower. Both the Magdalo and Magdiwang forces suffered heavy casualties – more than 400 were killed, according to the Spanish body count – and were soon repulsed.³⁹

After the battle, Bonifacio and the Magdiwang commanders went to Imus to confer with Aguinaldo and other Magdalo leaders. Judging from the memoirs written decades later by Aguinaldo, Ricarte, and Santiago Alvarez, heated words may have been exchanged. Aguinaldo blamed the Magdiwang forces for moving forward too late – two hours after the time that had been set. Only when the Magdalo troops were already in retreat, he writes, did they hear a few shots (“*kaunting putukan*”) from the

Magdiwang positions to the south and west of the town.⁴⁰ The two Magdiwang generals, contrarily, blame the Magdalo forces for retreating from the scene of battle without first informing the Magdiwang forces they had decided to do so.⁴¹

Wherever the truth lay, there had plainly been serious problems of coordination and communication between the two armies. The commanders probably recognized, however, that the Spaniards would still have prevailed even if those problems had not arisen. Any further attempt to retake Silang at that time, they must have concluded, was likely to be equally ill-fated.

[Aguinaldo's recollections do not tally either with Spanish accounts in relation to only "a few shots" being fired from the Magdiwang's positions, nor with the memoirs of Ricarte and Alvarez in relation to Bonifacio's participation in the counterattack. Aguinaldo says he planned the operation with Ricarte and another Magdiwang commander without Bonifacio's consent ("*wala man lang kapahintulutan*"), and he does not say Bonifacio was present at the battle, with Ricarte to the west of the town.]⁴²

After the discussion in Imus about the failure to retake Silang, Bonifacio raised another issue – it was being rumored, he said, that the Magdalo secretary of war, Daniel Tirona, wanted to lure Ricarte and Pascual Alvarez away from the Magdiwang army by commissioning them as generals in the Magdalo army. Since all three men were present, Bonifacio took the opportunity to ask them directly if the rumor was true. Pascual Alvarez and Ricarte "laughed it off as a private joke, but glanced at secretary Tirona" ("*lihim na nagtawanan at sinulyapan lamang ang kagawad Tirona*").⁴³ Ricarte confirms in his own memoir that the reports Bonifacio heard were correct.⁴⁴

24 Feb
1897

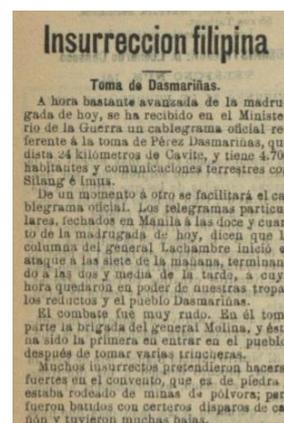
Long columns of Spanish troops march out from Silang towards the next town to the north, Dasmariñas.

25 Feb
1897

The Spaniards attack and occupy Dasmariñas in the face of heavy resistance, killing over 400 combatants and a large number of civilians.

As in Silang, they put the town to the torch. "More than a hundred men, women and children were burned," one of the *cazadores* wrote home. We burned all their houses."⁴⁵

Again, the memoirists disagree about which troops were involved in the fighting. Ricarte says that the Magdalo and Magdiwang armies both posted a large number of fighters in the town before the attack, and that both suffered many casualties. Ricarte also says, as does Alvarez, that fighters from both armies attempted without success to strike back, and that Bonifacio participated in those counterattacks with



the Magdiwang forces and his own small contingent.⁴⁶ Telesforo Canseco, a Spanish resident of Cavite, also says that troops from a number of Magdiwang towns went to Dasmaringas, and towards Salitran a little further to the north, and that several were killed or wounded.⁴⁷

Aguinaldo, on the other hand, mentions only that one Magdiwang commander brought troops to Dasmaringas, and that he did so without Bonifacio's consent ("*walang kapahintulutan*").⁴⁸

Late Feb
1897

By this time the Magdiwang council is said to have been holding eight Spaniards as prisoners, including three priests - Fr. Antonio Piernavieja, mentioned above; Fr. Agapito Echegoyen, the parish priest of Amadeo; and Fr. Domingo Candenias, the parish priest of Talisay, Batangas - and Matias Rivero, an Augustinian lay brother.⁴⁹

Shortly after Spanish forces had taken Silang, Bonifacio appointed a special tribunal - comprising Santos Nocon, Teodoro Gonzales and Artemio Ricarte - and the prisoners were put on trial. Accounts differ as to the nature of the charges. The case against Piernavieja presumably included his passing information to the enemy, but the prosecution may also have raised older allegations against him. In the wake of the Cavite mutiny of 1872, he had identified many prominent liberals and subversives in Bulacan to the authorities and had thereby been instrumental in dispatching them into long exile.⁵⁰ Piernavieja and the two other friars are also said to have confessed (under duress) to the corporate culpability of their religious orders for the execution of Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora in 1872, and of Rizal in 1896.⁵¹

28 Feb
1897

Found guilty by the tribunal and sentenced to death, the three friars and the lay brother are taken to a spot between the towns of Naik and Maragondon and executed by firing squad. Bonifacio is present, together with local Magdiwang leaders, troops and townspeople.⁵²

The executions deepened the enmity between the Magdiwang and Magdalo councils. Aguinaldo says in his memoirs that he wrote to Bonifacio urging that Frs. Echegoyen and Candenias (who had initially been in the Magdalo's custody) be treated leniently because they had not committed any serious crimes, but that his intervention was to no avail.⁵³

After the executions, Aguinaldo is said to have angrily denounced Bonifacio and the others responsible as "*cruelles*" and atheists.⁵⁴ So far as Bonifacio was concerned, the accusation of atheism was false. He was under pain of excommunication from the Catholic Church because he was a mason (as indeed was Aguinaldo), but masons professed to abhor atheism. "The doors of Masonry," stipulated the code to which the Philippine lodges of the time subscribed, "will never open to an atheist or to those who deny the existence of the Supreme Creator."⁵⁵ And when Bonifacio had drafted a "Decalogue" for Katipunan, his first "commandment" told members to "Believe with a fervent heart in the Creator ("*Sumapalataya sa Maykapal ng*

taimtim sa puso").⁵⁶

c. Early
March
1897

Bonifacio issues a proclamation, headed "*Mararahas na manga Anak ng Bayan,*" praising the Katipunan's soldiers for their bravery in resisting the Spanish offensive and exhorting them to remain steadfast in the battles still to come.

Already, says Bonifacio, the enemy has burnt towns, slaughtered civilians and raped women – acts that cry out for vengeance and justice. Many of us, he forewarns, may die in the fighting, but it is our duty, our legacy to our country, race and kin: "Your dying breath will be the breath that gives life to our nation and will serve as a loving memory to your brothers whom you leave behind." ["*Ang inyong mapupugtong hininga, ay siyang magbibigay buhay sa ating Bayan at siyang matamis na alaala sa gunita ng inyong mga kapatid na maiiwan.*"]⁵⁷

8 Mar
1897

Bonifacio writes a note to Jacinto to accompany a consignment of cartridges being sent to the north by the Magdiwang council.

In his note, Bonifacio cautions Jacinto that their correspondence is not secure. His letters have often been opened before he receives them. He therefore asks Jacinto to use a special code - "the code of the 2nd degree" - whenever he wants to write about matters of secrecy.⁵⁸

c.mid-
Mar 1897

Bonifacio writes to Jacinto that "here the enmity ("*pagkakaalit*") between [the Magdiwang and Magdalo councils] is very great, because Magdalo wants to rule everybody and the whole of Katagalugan, because - they say - nothing but the Government of Imus is recognized there and throughout Europe."

It is not clear what "recognized there" means in this context – in the Magdalo zone, or Spain? Whatever it means, Bonifacio believes the Magdalo council's ambition is "to rule everybody". Their plan, he tells Jacinto, is to constitute a new government with Emilio Aguinaldo as President and General-in-Chief; his cousin Baldomero Aguinaldo as Director of Military works; and other Magdalo leaders in key posts. "The Magdiwang people," Bonifacio writes, "will be given positions as sub-director or sub-minister. This plan truly disgusts the ministers of Magdiwang, who know that if the Imus [Magdalo] people are elected as a result of their politicking [*'kanilang politika'*] they will govern here in [San Francisco de] Malabon. The greed [*'kasakiman'*] of the Magdalo people is truly sickening [*'nakasusuklam'*], and has come to be the cause of their many reverses."⁵⁹

Tensions between the two councils, Bonifacio confides to Jacinto, have also arisen over the purchase of weapons in Hong Kong. The Katipunan's two emissaries – José Alejandrino and Feliciano Jocson – have arrived in the British colony, but apparently have neither adequate funds nor the correct form of authorization. And yet Bonifacio believed what they needed had

already been sent. He suspects the Magdalo leaders might be to blame for this “mystery” [*hiwaga*], and has therefore decided that in future the Magdiwang council, “together with our brethren there [to the north and east of Manila] will pay for everything, so that the Magdalo people will not get involved.”

Bonifacio tells Jacinto, however, that despite the problems in Hong Kong a shipment of weapons is expected soon, and that Paciano Rizal has gone to the agreed landing point (in Look, Batangas) to await their arrival.⁶⁰

c.mid-
Mar 1897

Shortly after dispatching this letter to Jacinto, Bonifacio decided to go to Batangas himself to wait for the ship.⁶¹ Given the distrust he expresses in his letter, he perhaps wanted to make sure the weapons were distributed in a way he thought fair, and that the Magdalo army did not get a larger share than had been agreed. Gregoria de Jesus later told Jacinto that Bonifacio already suspected the Magdalo people were intercepting the military supplies he and the Magdiwang were sending to, and being sent by, the KKK forces to the north.⁶²

No shipment of weapons ever arrived. The emissaries in Hong Kong found it impossible to arrange, partly due to logistical reasons and the need for secrecy, but perhaps mainly because, as Bonifacio had feared, they hadn't been given enough money. Emilio Aguinaldo says in his memoirs that the Magdalo and Magdiwang councils together gave Alejandrino and Jocoson 20,000 Mexican pesos (\$10,000) to accomplish their mission.⁶³ Alejandrino, on the other hand, recalls that the Cavite councils “were so short of funds ... that they could not even furnish me with the necessary funds for the trip”.⁶⁴

c.16 Mar
1897

Whilst Bonifacio was away in Batangas, Aguinaldo came to San Francisco de Malabon to consult the Magdiwang leaders on letters he had just received from two Spaniards urging a negotiated peace in order to avoid further bloodshed – one from Father Pio Pi, superior of the Society of Jesus, who had written at the behest of the auditor general of the army, Nicolas de la Peña, and the other from Rafael Comenge, the *Interventor General* of the colonial government.⁶⁵

Father Pi asked in his letter whether Aguinaldo would be willing to meet the auditor general of the army (or some other representative of the government) to discuss a cessation of hostilities. “It may well be,” Father Pi wrote, “that among your own desires and objectives, there are some which are just and merit attention: if regarding these complaints some agreement should be reached which would terminate the war, I am certain that an immediate amnesty would be granted, with more liberal terms than the amnesty already given.”⁶⁶ The letter Aguinaldo received from Rafael Comenge was couched in very similar terms.

Aguinaldo told the Magdiwang leaders that he would be prepared to enter into negotiations with Spanish representatives, and according to Bonifacio's account he outlined the demands he thought the revolutionists should

make in order to reach a peace agreement – notably Filipino representation in the Spanish parliament and the expulsion of the friars. The Magdiwang leaders told Aguinaldo they were not inclined to embark upon peace talks on this basis, but that the letters should be discussed with Bonifacio before any substantive response was sent.⁶⁷

17 Mar
1897

Aguinaldo replies to Father Pi's letter on March 17. He specifies nothing about the demands or concessions he wished to discuss, but says he is willing to meet "any delegate of [the colonial] government who comes to the territory under my command," and suggests March 24 as a convenient date.⁶⁸

Aguinaldo also writes to the town presidents within the Magdiwang's area of jurisdiction - without the Magdiwang council's knowledge - to sound out their views on a negotiated peace.

As soon as Magdiwang president Mariano Alvarez got to hear about this, according to Bonifacio, he decided to convene a big meeting ("*pulong*") at the *casa hacienda* in Tejeros so that representatives of the two councils, together with Bonifacio and the other leading revolutionists in the area, could discuss how to respond to the Spanish overtures. Alvarez dispatched a messenger to Batangas to urge Bonifacio to get back to Cavite as soon as possible.⁶⁹

20-21 Mar
1897

Bonifacio arrives back in San Francisco de Malabon, and tells the Magdiwang leaders he is firmly opposed to negotiating or reaching an agreement with the enemy [*"ayaw ngang makipagusap o makipagkasundo sa kaaway"*].⁷⁰

Aguinaldo says he got word that Bonifacio was angry that the letters about peace talks had not been addressed to him.⁷¹ Bonifacio would doubtless have been even more incensed had he found out that Aguinaldo referred in his reply to Father Pi about "the government of which I am head" and "the Republic" - neither of which existed. Aguinaldo did not mention the Katipunan.⁷²

Bonifacio says in one of his letters to Jacinto that although Mariano Alvarez convened the Tejeros meeting primarily to discuss peace talks, the majority wanted to establish a government [*"ang karamihan sa Pulong na ito ay minagaling na itayo ang isang Pamahalaan"*] and elect its leaders.⁷³

It is not entirely clear from Bonifacio's letter whether Bonifacio knew beforehand that a new government would be on the agenda. Gregoria de Jesus, though, said he imagined the meeting would be solely about the enemy's peace overtures. Not until Bonifacio arrived at the *casa hacienda*, she later told Jacinto, did he find out that the formation of a government was also to be discussed [*"ang kaniyang boong akala ang paghuhuntahan ang bagay nahiling ng ating kaaway ng silay dumating sa bahay o Hasienda ng Tejero ay ang pagtatayo ng Gobierno sa bagay na iyon..."*]⁷⁴

Mariano Alvarez, however, specifically mentioned the formation of a government when he sent out the urgent, short-notice invitations to the meeting. Was this his own decision, or was he pressed by others? Did he tell Bonifacio or not? We don't know.

21 Mar
1897

Magdalo president Baldomero Aguinaldo writes to Felix Cuenca and Mariano Noriel (Magdalo leaders in the town of Bacoor) telling them he has just received Mariano Alvarez's invitation to the meeting.

"We have been invited," Aguinaldo writes, "to go tomorrow, the 22nd, to the hacienda of Tejeros" in order to elect the gentlemen ["*maguino*"] who will head the Revolutionary Government and the governments in each province ["*Kgg na pulungan ng hihimacsic (Gobierno revolucionario) at pulungan din naman ng hihimacsic sa bauat hucuman (Gobierno Provincial)*"].

Baldomero Aguinaldo asks Cuenca and Noriel to consider who would be worthy candidates, impresses upon them the importance of going to the meeting (unless the Spanish offensive made it too dangerous to travel), and directs them to send word urgently to KKK presidents in other towns telling them also to attend without fail. .⁷⁵



Jim Richardson
Revised March 2021

PICTURE SOURCES

Andres Bonifacio – Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla

Santos Nocon's house – Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*

Andres Bonifacio's signature – Archivo General Militar de Madrid

"Kataastaasang Kapulungan" – Adrian Cristobal, *Tragedy of the Revolution* [City of Manila; Studio 5].

Santiago Alvarez – Wikipedia

Mariano Alvarez – abs.cbn

Artemio Ricarte – Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*

Emilio Aguinaldo – britannica.kids

Baldomero Aguinaldo – Cuerpo de Vigilancia papers, National Commission for Culture and the Arts

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"Toma de Silang" – *La Justicia* (Madrid), February 19, 1897. [Biblioteca Nacional de España].

"Toma de Damarinas" – *La Unión Católica* (Madrid), February 26, 1897. [Biblioteca Nacional de España].

Cavite map – "Provincia de Cavite y Región Limitrofe" (Manila: Lit. de Carmelo y Bauerman, 1896) [Biblioteca Nacional de España].

CAVITE, 1896



The purple-shaded area to the west encompasses the municipalities under the Magdiwang council's jurisdiction; and the orange-shaded area to the east shows the towns under the Magdalo's jurisdiction. The Magdiwang zone encompassed eleven municipalities (Noveleta, Rosario, Santa Cruz de Malabon, San Francisco de Malabon, Naic, Ternate, Maragondon, Indang, Bailen, Magallanes and Alfonso) and the Magdalo zone encompassed eight (Bacoor, Cavite Viejo, Imus, Carmona, Perez Dasmariñas, Silang, Amadeo and Mendez Nunez.) The boundaries between municipalities are not shown on the original 1896 map, so the line showing the border between the Magdiwang and Magdalo zones is approximate, not exact.

Responsibility for errors in these notes is not entirely mine. Many of the errors are embedded in the sources, which indubitably contain lapses of memory both innocent and deliberate. On some issues the evidence is conflicting.

As always, comments and corrections are welcome, either beneath this post or to kasaysayan@googlemail.com

Many of the illustrations have been taken from the web, where many images get posted without proper attribution. If credit is given below to "secondary sources" rather than the rightful owners I apologize, and can either amend the acknowledgment or delete the image from the post.

NOTES

- ¹ Carlos Ronquillo, *Ilang talata tungkol sa paghihimagsik nang 1896-1897* [1898], edited by Isagani R. Medina, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), 650. In an endnote, Medina says Ronquillo was mistaken because other sources say Bonifacio did not arrive in Cavite until December 1897. Ronquillo was in fact correct on this point, and the other sources are wrong – two contemporary documents confirm that Bonifacio reached the town of San Francisco de Malabon on the afternoon of November 18. Pascual Alvarez (Secretary of S.B. Magdiwang), Circular to town presidents, November 18, 1896; and KKK council in Maguagui (Naik), Circular to town presidents, November 18, 1896 (“Historia Civil de Filipinas,” Tomo 6.6, 200 [on microfilm], University of Santo Tomas archives).
- ² Emilio Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita ng himagsikan* (Manila: Cristina Aguinaldo Suntay, 1964), 135-8.
- ³ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 139.
- ⁴ Artemio Ricarte, *Himagsikan nang manga Pilipino laban sa Kastila*. (Yokohama: Karihan Café, 1927), 31-2.
- ⁵ See note 1 above.
- ⁶ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 32-4; Santiago V. Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution: Memoirs of a General* [1927], translated by Paula Carolina S. Malay (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 302-3.
- ⁷ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 141.
- ⁸ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 70.
- ⁹ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to the High Military Council, December 12, 1896 [Archivo General Militar de Madrid: Caja 5677, leg.1.120].
- ¹⁰ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 232.
- ¹¹ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 150-1.
- ¹² Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 35; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 305.
- ¹³ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 35.
- ¹⁴ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 151-2.
- ¹⁵ Teodoro M. Kalaw, *The Philippine Revolution* [1925] (Mandaluyong: Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation, 1969), 48.
- ¹⁶ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 152-4.
- ¹⁷ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 306; Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 651-3.
- ¹⁸ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 155.
- ¹⁹ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 37; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 306.
- ²⁰ See for example, Andres Bonifacio to Emilio Jacinto, March 8, 1897, in Adrian E. Cristobal, *The Tragedy of the Revolution* (Makati City: Studio 5 Publishing Inc., 1997), 146-47.
- ²¹ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 37.
- ²² Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 145-6.
- ²³ José P. Santos, *Si Bonifacio at ang himagsikan* (Manila: n.pub, 1935), 25.
- ²⁴ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 70; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 303-4.
- ²⁵ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 309-11. Alvarez says the fiesta was held in early January, but another account says it was in early December. Telesforo Canseco, “Historia de la Insurreccion Filipina en Cavite”, 1897, 59. [Manuscript in the Dominican Archives, Quezon City; typed copy available on microfilm at the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila].
- ²⁶ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 160.
- ²⁷ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 458.
- ²⁸ Gregorio de Santiago Vela, *Ensayo de una biblioteca Ibero-Americana del Orden de San Agustin*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Imp. del Asilo de Huérfanos del Sagrado Corazon de Jesús, 1922), 313.
- ²⁹ José M. del Castillo y Jiménez, *El Katipunan ó El Filibusterismo en Filipinas* (Madrid: Imp. del Asilo de Huérfanos del Sagrado Corazon de Jesús, 1897), 347.
- ³⁰ *Julio Nakpil and the Philippine Revolution, with the Autobiography of Gregoria de Jesus*, edited and translated by Encarnación Alzona (Manila: Heirs of Julio Nakpil, 1964), 90-92,137. In 1903, Nakpil reworked his “Marangal na Dalit” as a tribute to Rizal under the title “Salve, Patria,” but the only surviving copies of the original score were destroyed in 1945, during the battle for Manila. The version of “Marangal na Dalit” we have today was reconstructed by Nakpil from memory when he was in his eighties.
- ³¹ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 46-7; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 314.
- ³² Ibid.

- ³³ John S. Mallory, "The Philippine Insurrection, 1896-1898," in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1903*, Vol. III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 409; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 314.
- ³⁴ Manuel Sastron, *La insurrección en Filipinas y Guerra Hispano-Americana en el archipiélago* (Madrid: Imp. De la Sucesora de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1901), 228.
- ³⁵ Fernando Palanco Aguado, "Letters from a Spanish Soldier in the Revolution," in Florentino Rodao and Felice Noelle Rodriguez, eds., *The Philippine Revolution of 1896: Ordinary lives in extraordinary times* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), 149; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 314.
- ³⁶ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 315.
- ³⁷ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 48-9; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 315.
- ³⁸ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 48-9; Federico de Monteverde y Sedano, *Campaña de Filipinas: La División Lachambre, 1897*. (Madrid: Hernando y Compañía, 1898), 248.
- ³⁹ Monteverde, *Campaña de Filipinas*, 251.
- ⁴⁰ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 168-9; see also Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 435-7.
- ⁴¹ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 49; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 315.
- ⁴² Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 166.
- ⁴³ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 316.
- ⁴⁴ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 49. In a separate autobiographical note, Ricarte states that he was handed his appointment by Tirona on February 24, 1897, and that it was signed by Emilio Aguinaldo as the Magdalo Captain General and General in Chief. "Documentos expedidos al ciudadano Sr. Artemio Ricarte y Garcia con el simbolico "Vibora" por el Gobierno de Filipinas en la revolución del año de 1898, cuyos originales se encuentran depositados en la sociedad Comercial o Club Comercial titulado Banal na Kalayaan como iniciador y Presidente de la misma." Philippine Revolutionary Records, Reel No. 39, Document No. 703.
- ⁴⁵ Sastron, *La insurrección en Filipinas*, 231; Aguado, "Letters from a Spanish Soldier," 149; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 316.
- ⁴⁶ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 51; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 316.
- ⁴⁷ Canseco, "Historia," 73.
- ⁴⁸ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 169.
- ⁴⁹ Canseco, "Historia," 68; "Declaración importantísima de los tres frailes y un lego en San Francisco de Malabon, 1897," cited in Bernadita Reyes Churchill, Eden Manalo Gripaldo and Digna Balangue Apilado (eds.), *The Movement for Independence in the Philippines (1896-1898): Calendar of documents in the Archives of the Cuerpo de Vigilancia de Manila*. Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2011), 75.
- ⁵⁰ Canseco, "Historia," 69.
- ⁵¹ Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 15-6 sic; *La Democracia*, July 12 and 14, 1906, cited in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 52 (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1907), 192-93; Martin F. Venago, *Ang mga Paring Pilipino sa Kasaysayan ng Inang Bayan* (Maynila: n.pub, 1929), 7, 41-42.
- ⁵² Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 15-6; Canseco, "Historia," 69-70. The fate of the four other Spanish prisoners is not known, but Canseco heard a rumour that they were executed about two months later.
- ⁵³ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 156.
- ⁵⁴ Ricarte, *Memoirs*, 15-6; Canseco, "Historia," 69; personal communication from John N. Schumacher, SJ, January 2, 2006.
- ⁵⁵ Reynold S. Fajardo, *The Brethren: Masons in the Struggle for Philippine Independence* (Manila: Enrique L. Locsin and the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, 1998), 106.
- ⁵⁶ Andres Bonifacio, "Katungkulang gagawin ng mga Z.Ll.B," Photograph of original handwritten document in Adrian E. Cristobal, *The Tragedy of the Revolution* (Makati City: Studio 5 Publishing Inc., 1997), 40.
- ⁵⁷ Andres Bonifacio, "Mararahas na manga Anak ng Bayan," undated proclamation, c. February or March 1897, in Pedro S. de Achutegui SJ and Miguel A. Bernad SJ, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution of 1896: A documentary history* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila, 1972), 570.
- ⁵⁸ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto dated March 8, 1897, in Cristobal, *Tragedy of the Revolution*, 146-7.
- ⁵⁹ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto, c. March 15, 1897, transcribed by Ambeth R. Ocampo from a photocopy of the original letter and appended to his "Andres Bonifacio: Mito o Realidad?" First Annual Andres Bonifacio/ Parian Lectures, Bulwagang Katipunan, Manila City Hall, November 29,

1989, Mimeograph, 25-31. Bonifacio wrote his letter partly in cipher, but for some reason he used the regular Katipunan code – which was widely known – rather than the “code of the 2nd degree” he had recently asked Jacinto to use.

⁶⁰ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto, c. March 15, 1897, as cited.

⁶¹ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto, April 24, 1897 in Cristobal, *Tragedy of the Revolution*, 146-7.

⁶² Gregoria de Bonifacio, “Kasulatan” sent to Emilio Jacinto, c. June 1897. Transcription by Ambeth R. Ocampo from a photocopy of the document, appended to his “Andres Bonifacio: Mito o Realidad?” as cited.

⁶³ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 120.

⁶⁴ José Alejandrino, *The Price of Freedom* (Manila: M. Colcol, 1949), 61.

⁶⁵ Canseco, “Historia,” 74; *Diario Oficial* (Madrid), February 2, 1897.

⁶⁶ Pio Pi, SJ, Letter to Emilio Aguinaldo, March 14, 1897 in Achutegui and Bernad, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution*, 317.

⁶⁷ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto, April 24, 1897, as cited; Gregoria de Bonifacio, “Kasulatan” sent to Emilio Jacinto, c. June 1897, as cited.

⁶⁸ Emilio Aguinaldo, Letter to Pio Pi, SJ, March 17, 1897 in Achutegui and Bernad, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution*, 322.

⁶⁹ Andres Bonifacio, Letter to Emilio Jacinto, April 24, 1897, as cited.

⁷⁰ Gregoria de Bonifacio, “Kasulatan” sent to Emilio Jacinto, c. June 1897, as cited.

⁷¹ Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita*, 157-8; Carlos Quirino, *The Young Aguinaldo: from Kawit to Biyak-na-Bato* (Manila: Aguinaldo Centennial Year, 1969), 133.

⁷² Emilio Aguinaldo, Letter to Pio Pi, SJ, March 17, 1897 in Achutegui and Bernad, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution*, 322-3.

⁷³ Andres Bonifacio, Letters to Emilio Jacinto, April 16, 1897 and April 24, 1897, both in Cristobal, *Tragedy of the Revolution*, 146-7.

⁷⁴ Gregoria de Bonifacio, “Kasulatan” sent to Emilio Jacinto, c. June 1897, as cited. Ricarte and Alvarez also recall that the formation of a government was not the Tejeros meeting’s initial purpose. Their memoirs, both written in the 1920s, say the original intention was to discuss the defence of the Magdiwang zone against the advancing Spanish army – a recollection that does not accord with the more contemporary accounts of Bonifacio and his wife. Ricarte, *Himagsikan*, 52; Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 317.

⁷⁵ Baldomero Aguinaldo, Note to Felix Cuenca and Mariano Noriel, March 21, 1897, in Achutegui and Bernad, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution*, 343.
